

おまえを
オタクに
してやるから
俺をリア充に
してくれ！

Omae wo OTAKU ni
shiteyaru kara
Ore wo RIAJU ni
shite kure!

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②



ファンタジア文庫

Omae o Otaku ni Shiteyaru kara, Ore o Riajuu ni Shitekure!

vol.2

by Murakami Rin

[Novel Updates](#)

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Epub: [Trollo WN/LN EPUB](#)

Chapter 1

The rainy season began and summer had officially started.

The world was calling for us to cut down on electricity usage, so even our house was relying on electric fans instead of air-conditioners to fan off the summer heat; anyhow, it was unbearably hot every day.

I was facing the mirror, sweating profusely, and was focusing all my attention on trimming my eyebrows.

"Naoki, I was cleaning up your room yesterday and found a strange book."

My hand slipped from the shock of suddenly hearing my mother's voice ring out from behind, and I ended up over-cutting part of my eyebrow.

Aah, the strange sound that escaped from my lips sounded **Otaku-ish**^[1], and some might even call it creepy; no, it wasn't the time for this; come back, my eyebrow! No, it wasn't the time for this either.

"Don't look at my books without my permission!"

To a healthy high school student like me undergoing puberty, the term 'strange book' could only mean one thing.

It was probably a **Doujin** work (18+ of course) that I'd bought the other day. If it was the one with the stepsister, it would still be fine, but if she'd found the one with the bit of dangerous play..... I was finished! She would end up with the wrong impression that her son was into really kinky stuff.

With a pale face, I turned around to plead my case to Mom.

"Did you buy this?"

The book Mom was holding was not the erotic book I'd expected.

『Bible to Becoming a Popular Guy』.

"Dohgya -----!"

I'd rather she'd found my erotic books.

That book was a romance guide book I'd bought the other day when I didn't have all my wits about me.

"As your mother, I'm really happy to see you reading a book like this!"

"You've got it wrong! I just happened to borrow it from a friend....."

I only realized after buying it that the book was targeted towards working adults, and contained advice on which restaurants were good, which hotels were first-class, what kind of cars to buy, and totally inappropriate and useless information to a high school student.

"Naoki's reading this kind of book!? How dumb! Did your head get fried by the heat!?"

The girl who grabbed the book from Mom's hands and threw me that sharp criticism was none other than my little sister, Akari.

"You're annoying! It's none of your business anyway!"

I frantically took back the book from Akari's clutches. I couldn't stand any further ridicule.

"Crap. It's already this late! I'm off!"

Once again, without my hair properly styled, and leaving my eyebrow as it was, I hurriedly left home.

My name is Kashiwada Naoki. Around two and half months have passed since I entered high school.

I'm a closet **Otaku**, and my goal is to become a **Riajuu**^[2] and date the girl I like. However, a certain someone discovered my **Otaku** secret, and I ended up making a pact with her. She promised to guide me and help me become a **Riajuu**, and in return, I have to help her achieve her goal.

I walked along my usual route from the station to the school, and reached the gates. As I was changing into my indoor shoes at the shoe cupboard area, I overheard a group of four girls talking beside me.

"Your peach-colored nails are really cute! Did you get them done at the salon!?"

"No, I tried doing them myself. Isn't it expensive to get them done at a salon?"

"Seriously!? Did you really do them yourself? Amazing!"

"Can you help do mine next time, too!?"

..... it was the conversation of a species called **Gyarus**^[3], which was definitely in the top three on my list of things I have trouble dealing with.

Mixed in that group was a familiar face.

"Sure, if this level is okay with you. How would you like them done?"

Koigasaki Momo.

A **Bishoujo**^[4] who could turn all eyes her way, with brown permed hair and gaudy nails and make-up. She was, sad as it is for me to admit it, the type of girl who would never mix with a guy from the bottom of the hierarchy like me..... normally speaking, that is.

"Ah, you girls can go on ahead.",

The other girls left Koigasaki and headed for the classroom.

"..... Kashiwada."

"Woahh!?"

It was a bit too much of a surprise and I ended up raising my voice.

The **Gyaru** who was at the center of the **Gyaru** group just now, Koigasaki, called out to me. It felt a little uncanny.

"Don't make strange sounds like that. It's what makes you look like an **Otaku**."

"Don't say the word '**Otaku**'!"

After I was going through to maintain my closet **Otaku** front at school.

"About the game you lent me, I couldn't make any progress midway..... isn't it really difficult?"

"Aah, indeed, an RPG may be too difficult for a beginner....."

"Why did you lend it to me when you know it's difficult! Lend me something easier!"

"Aah? Don't complain when you're the one who asked me for something that Suzuki's into!"

Koigasaki was a modern **Gyaru**, willful and violent, her mind mostly filled with thoughts of romance and fashion, with a completely **Sweet(LOL)**^[5] brain..... or so I had thought, not too long ago.

Even though I couldn't believe it myself, the one whom I had made a pact with was this person.

We made the pact that day because:

- Koigasaki needed help becoming an **Otaku** to get close to the guy she liked, Suzuki Souta, a hardcore **Otaku**.
- I needed help becoming a popular **Riajuu** to get close to my one-sided crush, Hasegawa Midori.

Our pact was to cooperate and help each other achieve our goals.

Koigasaki would teach me how to dress and act to become a popular **Riajuu** guy.

I would render appropriate help to make Koigasaki an **Otaku** so she could be on good terms with Suzuki.

Since I was also an **Otaku** and friends with Suzuki, I was well-placed to help Koigasaki achieve her goal. Our goals fit each other well, so we formed a pact.

"Did Ashida come to school today....."

I murmured to Koigasaki as we walked up the stairs to our classroom.

Ashida was a delinquent guy from my class, and the other day, I fought and came to blows with that delinquent.

In the end, I ran away, so Ashida was bound to take revenge on me, that was for sure.

Fearing the worst, I went to school the following day, but Ashida never showed up.

Ashida was also absent the next day. Today would make it three straight. He was already a delinquent who skipped school every now and then to begin with,

so there was nothing rare about his absence, but I found it unbelievable that he would keep shying away from an opportunity to take revenge on me.

"Aah, you don't need to worry about Ashida."

I was surprised at Koigasaki's words.

"After I told Miki, she used her big brother's name to threaten Ashida. Miki's big brother was a former big-time delinquent, so Ashida was really scared of him."

"Seriously!?"

By Miki, Koigasaki was referring to Sasagawa Miki, a close friend of hers and a somewhat delinquent-looking female student.

"Sasagawa is a pretty good person....."

I'd been scared of Ashida for the past few days, but there was no more need to be afraid, huh. Since Ashida had yet to come to school, I probably couldn't feel completely safe, but for now, I was a little relieved.

"Anyway, that thing's not important."

Koigasaki's expression suddenly contorted.

That thing? It concerns my life and death, girl.

"You....."

Koigasaki ran her eyes over my entire body.

Was there something strange about my looks? I was certain that this pattern of events indicated something was wrong with my body. I could tell, since it wasn't the first time.

Your hair's messed up, your eyebrows look weird, how many times have I heard that..... what will she say today?

"Are you wearing an undershirt like some old man!?"

Koigasaki whipped out her finger and pointed at me, with unconcealed anger.

"Eh..... undershirt? That's a blind spot of mine..... but if I wear nothing underneath, my skin would be visible from the sweating....."

"That's obvious, right!? It would be seriously unbelievable if you wore your uniform over your bare skin! But, an undershirt is equally no good!"

"Seriously....."

Before I knew it, the students passing by giggled away while looking at us. Nothing could be more embarrassing.

"And, doesn't part of your eyebrow look broken off!?"

"Aah, this..... is my Mom's fault!"

"Huuh!? Did you get your own mother to trim your eyebrows for you!? Are you a mother-con[6]!?"

"No way! That's not what it was!"

While arguing, we reached the classroom, opened the door and went in.

"Momo, heh, m'ning!"

Immediately upon entering the classroom, Koigasaki Momo's friend, Sasagawa Miki, greeted her.

She was a **Gyaru** with brown hair approaching blond, giving off a delinquent feel. Honestly speaking, even though I was afraid of and couldn't handle girls like her, I was truly grateful to her for resolving the incident with Ashida.

"Miki, morning!"

Koigasaki immediately hurried up to Sasagawa and the both of them hugged. I always wondered about this, but why are girls so into physical contact with each other? While it was a beautiful sight to behold, if it were guys, no matter how close they were, it would be unthinkable for them to hug each other.

I pretended not to see and started walking to my own seat which was beside the window.

"Ah, Kashiwada."

But, I was stopped by Sasagawa's voice and I turned around. Sasagawa rarely called out to me, so I was surprised.

"You know, I have something to tell you, so do you have some time during the break?"

"Ehh..... s-sure....."

Sasagawa's words scared me.

Sasagawa Miki probably hated me. Just the other day, she called out to me and warned me not to get close to Koigasaki.

Will it be something like that again?

"You're on good terms even with Sasagawa, huh? Didn't you just talk to her normally?"

Said Kiritani, a friend seated behind me, when I reached my seat.

"No, we're not on good terms or anything. Crap, what's she going to say to me....."

Anxious with fear, I slid my bag under my desk.

After homeroom that day, Ashida showed up to school, late. Despite what Koigasaki said, I was still distraught with fear. However, not even looking my way once, he collapsed on his desk and went to sleep.

After homeroom and first period ended, there was a five-minute break.

"Kashiwada."

I turned around to face the voice and saw Sasagawa, standing.

Following behind her, we exited the classroom, and she led me all the way to the staircase landing.

"Erhm, about the thing you want to tell me....."

As I fearfully looked at Sasagawa's face,

"Kashiwada, sorry!"

Sasagawa clapped her hands together before her face and apologized.

"Heyhy.....?"

I let out a dull utterance from the unexpected development.

"You see, I told you not to get close to Momo, didn't I? I got the wrong idea

and was sure you were clinging on to Momo, but I asked her about everything. You're just on normal, good terms."

"Eh, eeh?"

"And Kashiwada, you even stuck out for Momo and fought with Ashida, didn't you? You're surprisingly manlier than I thought. I've seriously changed my view of you!"

"Eh, no, it's nothing....."

I could never have imagined that Sasagawa would actually approve of me in this manner.

I felt a little embarrassed from her compliments.

"Please keep looking out for Momo!"

Even though I had only thought of Sasagawa as someone hard to deal with until then, she was really a good person who was thoughtful of her friends. Previously, when she told me not to get close to Koigasaki, she probably thought she was acting in her friend's best interests.

My opinion of Sasagawa was greatly changed that day.

Ashida never looked at me once all day, let alone talk to me. This time for sure, I was able to feel a sense of relief.

Two and a half months had passed since I started high school, with the goal of becoming a **Riajuu**. Even though I was still far from that goal, I supposed that, bit by bit, I had grown from that old self from middle school, who gave up on romance and became completely immersed in his **Otaku** hobbies.

Translator's Notes and References & OTARIA Glossary

1. [↑](#) **Otaku**: Someone who's obsessively interested in anime, manga and video games to the point of lacking a social life. See [here](#) for more information. Sometimes translated to nerd; in the spirit of the series, I left it untranslated.
2. [↑](#) **Riajuu**(リア充): Supposedly originating from [2ch](#) boards and made up of the words リアル(real/reality/real world) and 充実(fulfilling), a Riajuu is literally a person who leads a fulfilling real life. Simplistically, it can be taken to be the opposite of Otaku. Broadly speaking, people who hang out with friends regularly, people with boy/girlfriends, people who are popular with their peers, *etc.* etc., are all considered Riajuus. There have been a multitude of fairly liberal translations for this term to date; in the spirit of the series, it will be left untranslated.
3. [↑](#) **Gyaru**: A transliteration of the English word, 'gal'. Used in Japanese, it does not just mean 'girl', but specifically refers to a young girl (and also to a subculture comprised of such girls) who's dressed in a fashionable, glamorous style, which often involves the use of man-made stuff like wigs, fake nails, fake eyelashes, colored contacts, heavy makeup, *etc.* See [here](#) for more info. I switched it back to **Gyaru** for explicit, native pronunciation purposes and to avoid ambiguity with 'gal'.
4. [↑](#) **Bishoujo**: Literally "beautiful young girl". See [here](#) for more information. I left this untranslated because translating it to "beautiful/pretty young girl" is cumbersome, especially when it's used numerous times throughout the series. Moreover, it's a term used in many Otaku discussions throughout the series, and repeatedly translating "Bishoujo xxx" to "beautiful young girl games/types/anime/blah-blah-blah" makes it even more cumbersome. **If you don't believe me or disagree with me, try replacing the 17 Bishoujos**

in Volume 2 Chapter 3 with 'beautiful girl' or other similar variants and try reading it again. Note that I opted not to use Bishoujo in the manga because it doesn't appear as often and in such manner as in the Light Novel.

5. [↑](#) **Sweet(LOL):** Essentially a transliteration of the internet slang, スイーツ (笑). It might be used without the (LOL). Sweet(LOL) essentially refers to a girl who is heavily influenced by mass media, such as magazines, TV, ads, *etc.* that are targeted towards women. (LOL) is often added, especially on sites like 2ch, to further remove ambiguity (on the 'sweet' part) and add emphasis to the 'sarcastic' nuance in the word.
6. [↑](#) **Mother-con:** Short for mother complex.

Chapter 2

"Geh....."

I unintentionally let out a sound when I got back my mid-term results.

Normally, if I study, I can obtain above average results, but this time round, after going down with the flu, getting depressed thinking I had caused trouble to Koigasaki, getting into a fight with Ashida, *etc. etc.*, I never really managed to study much in the end.

The result was a crushing defeat. Most of my subjects were below average, and I failed my English.

You need to take a retest in a few days' time if you fail an exam. If you fail the retest as well, you spend your summer vacation taking remedial lessons.

"You failed English? I can see it clearly from behind."

Kiritani, who sits behind me, started poking fun at me.

"Shut up! What about you? What did you get for English?"

"32."

"Aren't you in the same boat!"

Crap, I was thinking of asking Kiritani to teach me if he'd scored well.

"Aah, what should I do?"

I clutched my head and sprawled myself on the desk.

"Why don't you get Koigasaki to teach you? You guys are on terms anyway."

"Koi-ga-saki.....?"

Koigasaki... did he mean that Koigasaki?

"Is she smart?"

"Are you living in the woods? She might not be at Hasegawa's level, but her name has been mentioned a number of times as one of the top achievers."

"Seriously?"

I didn't expect it. That girl who only has thoughts of romance between her ears is actually good in her studies. It is often said that a person should never be judged by her appearance.

During the next break, I quickly went over to Koigasaki's seat as soon as I saw that no one was talking to her, and said, "D-Do you have some time?"

"Eeh? What is it?"

In the past, it was a reach for me just to go talk to Koigasaki in class, but recently, I can manage that, at least. Seems like I, too, have grown.....

We could have just talked at her seat there and then, but I urged Koigasaki to follow me out of the classroom.

After reflecting on the incident where my friendly interactions with Koigasaki had led to Ashida's jealousy, I tried my best to be mindful and avoided talking to her inside the classroom.

We moved to the staircase landing and I wasted no time getting the point.

"It seems like your grades are pretty good. What did you get for English?"

"Huh? What's that all of a sudden? I don't really have good grades. More like, there's no way I will tell you what I got so suddenly, right?"

For some reason, she was suddenly in a bad mood. What happened?

"By the way, I got 28! I already told you mine, so tell me yours!"

"What kind of logic is that! Hey, you failed that, uwah!"

"Yeah, I failed. I'll get straight to the point. Teach me."

It was troublesome to beat about the bush, so I just directly made my request.

"Eh..... impossible."

"Instant death!? What a heartless girl!"

Indeed, I already knew this girl wouldn't just do anything for me if it didn't benefit her, but I was a little hopeful and thus rather depressed at the outcome.

"That's not it! I'm weak at English and didn't really get a good grade on it. Of course, while it wasn't as bad as failing, I didn't score well enough to be qualified to teach you. "

So that's the reason. Don't tell, is that why she's in such a bad mood? What an easy-to-understand girl.

"Ah, which reminds me, how about asking Hasegawa-san to help you out with your studies? She's top of the school year, seriously amazing!"

"What!"

At that moment, I suddenly found myself at a loss after hearing Hasegawa Midori's name, the girl I was in love with. But, I then noticed the other attention-grabbing part of that statement.

"..... top of the school year?"

"What, you didn't take a look at the bulletin board?"

In our school, the top ten in grades have their names, rankings, and marks posted on the bulletin board. Since I was confident I would definitely not make the top ten, I never bothered looking at it.

"Hasegawa is top of the school year!? That's really amazing!"

All this while, I had the feeling she should be pretty smart, but right now, that feeling had turned to absolute certainty. To think that she was actually top of the year.

"It might be futile, but why don't you try asking her for help?"

"..... huh, don't be absurd!"

Indeed, there could be nothing better than the top of the year, Hasegawa, teaching me English. It might even be an opportunity to get closer to her, so it was really killing two birds with one stone. But.....

"There's no way I can do that! We haven't really talked much, and asking her to help me out with my studies is just way too impudent!"

"Jeez, you're useless!"

"Even if you say that....."

My end goal was to get Hasegawa to like me and go out with me. I couldn't possibly blow my chances by setting a 'shameless' flag with her at this juncture.

"Even though I don't need to take a make-up test, I sure wish Hasegawa-san could help me with my English ~..... ah, Hasegawa-san!"

I looked where Koigasaki was pointing and saw Hasegawa exiting the classroom.

"Now, hurry up and get going!"

"Aah ~!? Like I said, it's impossible....."

Koigasaki literally pushed me from behind, and we came all the way to point-blank range of Hasegawa.

"Ah, Hasegawa....."

Hasegawa, who seemed to be going somewhere, turned around to face us.

As always, she was expressionless and said nothing.

"Ah, no, erm....."

No good. Like I thought, it was a bit unreasonable to ask for her help with my studies all of a sudden, when we weren't even on close terms.

"Ah, is any of your committee work giving you trouble.....!? If you need help with anything, please feel free to let me know!"

I said something that was completely off my original intent.

Hasegawa's face became puzzled, and in bewilderment, she said,

"All right, thank you....."

"Hasegawa-san!"

At that moment, Koigasaki suddenly poked her face out from behind me and called out to Hasegawa.

"You are amazing! You are top of the year, right?"

She easily went straight into the topic, and said what I'd struggled saying.

"I'm weak in English, you know..... if it's okay with you, can you teach me next time!?"

"..... me, teach you?"

Hasegawa looked really surprised at Koigasaki's words, but so was I.

"I'm not sure if I can teach it well, but if you are okay with that....."

"Really!? Thank you!"

Koigasaki got Hasegawa to help her with her studies.....? What kind of development is that?

As a question mark surfaced in my head, Koigasaki gave a light kick to my heel.

Ah, perhaps, it's that?

"Ah, erm!"

Slightly perplexed, I opened my mouth.

"If it's okay with you, could you maybe teach me as well!?"

I almost squandered a rare opportunity that Koigasaki provided me.

"If you are okay with me....."

Even though she remained expressionless, Hasegawa readily consented.

"T-Thank you!"

Following that, as we were deciding on the date, Hasegawa said anytime would be fine and that we might as well just promptly do it today after school.

With that, the discussion was over, and after saying "Then, I'll see you again after school", Hasegawa disappeared from before us.

I made sure that Hasegawa had really left us, and said,

"T-Thanks."

"You can't even ask that much on your own. Seriously, how useless can you get? I really can't believe it!"

After giving me a look of exasperated amazement, she went back into the class.

Since the other day, every now and then, I would think, maybe she's really a

good person.....

After waiting for what seemed like eternity, school was finally over for the day.

After the end-of-day homeroom ended, Koigasaki was talking to Hasegawa at Hasegawa's seat, so I hurriedly packed up and went over.

[File:Otaria v02
025.jpg](#)

"If it's okay with you, could you maybe teach me as well!?"

"Ah Kashiwada. We're going to study in the library, so we'll be moving there."

"O-Okay."

As we were leaving the room, I could feel the gazes of our male classmates. It was natural if you think about it.

Seeing a person like me who was at the bottom of the class hierarchy acting together with two of the cutest girls in class... no, in our school year, or in the worst case the entire school, was as abnormally unusual as finding a gold mine.

Following after the two, I left the classroom as if to escape the gazes of the crowd.

Our school library is relatively large, and the corner is partitioned into two areas: one where users must keep absolutely silent, and one where it is okay to whisper softly.

We put our bags on a table at the corner where it was okay to whisper, and sat down.

Hasegawa and Koigasaki sat beside each other, while I sat facing Hasegawa.

Just being at this point-blank range from Hasegawa was making me too nervous to get in the right frame of mind to do any kind of studying.

"Is there any particular area where you are weakest?"

Hasegawa asked us right after taking her seat.

As I normally had never seen her initiate a conversation, I was taken by surprise.

"I, I still don't quite understand how relative pronouns work....."

Hasegawa and Koigasaki turned their textbooks to the section on relative pronouns. I hurriedly opened to the same page as them.

"For long sentences, dividing them into two shorter phrases will make it easier to understand."

"Oooh ~ I see!"

"After splitting them up, are you able to interpret them?"

"Yeah, the first part is 『That is a book』, and part that comes after is 『She reads it often.....』."

"The two can thus be conjoined with this relative pronoun."

"I see! Then, in other words....."

Hasegawa was surprisingly unreticent..... this was the first time I had seen Hasegawa talk so much.

The more I look at her at such a close distance, the more I think her hair is beautiful and her skin is fair..... Koigasaki is also cute, but I feel that Hasegawa is the real orthodox beauty.....

"Hey, Kashiwada! Are you listening!? And Hasegawa-san is even taking the time to teach us..."

"Ehh!?"

Crap, I haven't been listening at all.....

"Kashiwada-kun, is there anything you don't understand?"

Hasegawa called my name for the first time! that's not it. Since Hasegawa is taking the trouble to ask me for my sake, I have to quickly answer her..... My eyes fell to the textbook. However, for some reason, I had no idea what I didn't

understand.....

Anyway, I was really weak in English. Even with my intuition and whatever I had attained from middle school, I could only get something like 28.

"Eh, ermmmm....."

Shaken, I flipped quickly through my textbook.

"Ah, this might be something I don't really understand....."

I opened a page that I was totally clueless about.

"This..... so, and....."

I just can't believe that Hasegawa is helping me with my studies. Am I going to get divine retribution? My heart palpitations wouldn't stop.

"..... do you understand?"

..... crap, once again, I was too nervous and hardly anything entered my head.....

But there was no way I could be honest about that.

"Y-Yeah....."

Of all things, I pretended to have understood.

"Hasegawa-san! About the relative pronouns earlier, for this, can I interpret it in this manner?"

"Yes, that's right. It's well done. You've completely gotten it."

"It's because you are good at teaching it~! And also, and also, how about this.....?"

It seemed like Hasegawa and Koigasaki were pretty unreserved with each other. And Koigasaki was gradually deepening her understanding.

With that, the study session, which lasted about one and a half hours, ended.

Despite having Hasegawa teach me a number of times, because of my nervousness and inner turmoil, hardly anything entered my head.

Besides, as Koigasaki gradually understood more and more, I felt embarrassed my own lack of understanding, and couldn't ask any questions proactively.

"Really thanks a lot, Hasegawa-san! After today, I think I managed to understand quite a lot more!"

As we were packing up our study tools, Koigasaki made a crisp smiling face. Unable to understand much of it, I couldn't help but feel envious of Koigasaki. No, I reaped what I sowed.

"Kashiwada, did you manage to understand? Will you be okay with your make-up test?"

"Hey, you....."

I had wanted to hide the miserable truth of my failure from Hasegawa.

"..... make-up test?"

Hasegawa reacted to that word.

"Ah, aaah..... but after Hasegawa taught me today, I'll be fine, I'll be fine!"

I forced a smile.

At that moment, Hasegawa looked at me.

She might have seen through my 『I'll be fine』 as a lie. Hasegawa's piercing gaze felt as if she could penetrate everything.

Hasegawa might have figured out the pathetic truth that I had lied about everything being fine despite failing to grasp a single thing that she had taught.

At that juncture, I too gave my thanks to Hasegawa and we parted ways at the library.

My heart was filled with a strong dose of guilt and self-loathing.

*

After school the following day, I studied at the library by myself.

Needless to say, the subject was English. If I failed the make-up test, there was a high chance that I would need to take remedial lessons during summer vacation.

I wanted to avoid that at all costs. I wanted to have fun during summer vacation. If possible, to invite Hasegawa to hang out.....

For that purpose, I had to pass the make-up test no matter what. It was also for the sake of Hasegawa who had taught me.

"Kashiwada-kun."

I turned around in surprise at the voice. There stood the person I least expected.

"Ha-Hasegawa!?"

"I've been looking for you."

Hasegawa came over and placed her bag on the table. She then took out several printouts from her bag.

Hasegawa had been looking for me? Why on earth would she do that?

"Here, I also passed a set to Koigasaki-san earlier....."

Those were copies of English notes, it seemed.

The areas that were tested this time round were put in order with beautiful handwriting.

"These are notes that consolidate the areas for the test this time that I made for myself. I might be doing something unnecessary, though....."

"For real!? Wow, this really helps! Is it really okay!? Thanks!"

I was deeply moved by this unbelievable thing that was happening right now. Hasegawa went out of her way to do such a thing for me.....

"I'm sorry if I get this wrong but..... Kashiwada-kun, I felt that you didn't really manage to deepen your understanding from my explanations yesterday....."

Like I thought, she knew!

I felt so awkward that I wanted to avert my gaze from Hasegawa.

"..... erm, I haven't really taught anyone up till now, so..... it was difficult to understand, right?"

"Eh.....?"

Hasegawa lowered her eyes apologetically.

I was stunned by Hasegawa's words.

Hasegawa isn't angry with me for not understanding her explanations, but is actually blaming herself for it?

"No, that's not it! Besides, Koigasaki also said that you are good at teaching. It's just that I'm too stupid to understand it!"

I denied vehemently.

Hasegawa appeared surprised at my words.

"..... Kashiwada-kun, if it's okay with you, in order to make up for not teaching you properly yesterday, shall I help you with your English today as well?"

"Eh, for real!? My, that'll be a life-saver, thanks!"

To think that Hasegawa would help me with my studies for two successive days..... and to top that, it's just the two of us today!

So, such a lucky thing can also happen to me when I'm attending school seriously!

..... no, this is not luck. Hasegawa was bothered by what happened yesterday and came all the way here looking for me.

She even made a copy of her notes for me; like I thought, even though Hasegawa appears unapproachable, she's really a very kind-hearted girl.

Following that, in the two or so hours remaining before school closed, Hasegawa diligently taught me English.

Like the day before, there were many areas I had trouble with, but this time, I asked her to go over again the parts that I couldn't understand.

As I wasn't shaken up like the day before and was able to interact with her, and also because Hasegawa was good at teaching, I felt that I managed to understand a lot more than the day before.

Before I knew it, it was ten minutes before school closed for the day, and the music signaling closing time started playing.

"Hasegawa, really thanks a lot! Unlike yesterday, I managed to understand most of it today! And with the notes you gave me as a reference, I'll take care of the rest by myself over the weekend!"

"Then that's great."

Remaining expressionless, Hasegawa started packing up.

"Then, I'll take my leave....."

Just like the day before, Hasegawa started announcing her departure at the library.

"Ah, w-wait a minute!"

I unconsciously stopped Hasegawa.

".....?"

"Erh no, i-i-i-if it's okay with you, shall we go back together?"

I made my resolve and suggested to Hasegawa.

It was because I felt that it would feel kind of lonely to just part ways at the library.

"With me? I don't really mind, though."

Hasegawa looked bewildered, but acquiesced.

The jitters I was carrying for fear of being rejected dissipated into extreme happiness when I heard that.

It was all good until now.

The problems started here.

We were walking along the road that led from school to the station. We just walked on, without saying anything.

Even though it was good that I'd managed to accompany her, I had no idea what kind of topic I should start to engage her in a conversation. Earlier, since I was in the role of a tutee, I could keep talking, but right now, with nothing to talk about, I felt extremely troubled.

"Erh, ermm, Hasegawa, where was your middle school?"

"..... it was a public school in my hometown."

"I see~."

The conversation ended.

No, wait, don't let it end here, stupid. There are a number of ways for me to expand from here, right? But, I don't want her to feel creeped out by me asking for personal info. Then, on the spur of the moment, I remembered what was written in the 『Bible to Becoming a Popular Guy』. During the conversation, you can casually lead up to asking for the next date, was what was written inside I think..... don't ask me for the impossible.

Then, I noticed Hasegawa looking hard at one particular place.

Following Hasegawa's line of sight, I saw a rental store.

"Do you want to drop by TSUTAYA^[1]?"

"Eh? Erm, I've always wanted to enter, but I've never been to one....."

"You've never been to one? Once you make a card, you can immediately rent something; it's really convenient, you know?"

"Card? Is it easy to make one?"

"Of course!"

Hasegawa and I entered the TSUTAYA store. Hasegawa seemed a little confused.

Out of habit, I started heading to the anime corner, but managed to frantically halt my legs.

"Wow, there are so many DVDs....."

Perhaps it was because she had hardly visited any type of media rental store before, Hasegawa was looking at the displayed DVDs in surprise.

"Hasegawa, was there anything you wanted to borrow?"

"Erhmm..... I wonder if they also have comedy shows."

Hasegawa and comedies!? That was too unexpected.

Suppressing my bout of unrest, I brought Hasegawa to the comedy DVDs corner.

"Ah, this....."

What Hasegawa immediately took was, 『All of Hitoshi Matsuda's^[2] Forbidden Stories』.

"Ah, they have this, too!"

Next, she took 『Linkehn^[3]』..... I wonder whether she's a pure-bred comedy lover?

It might have been my imagination, but I could see that Hasegawa was a little more charged up than when she was at school. Of course, compared to a normal girl's excitement, her excitement was still lower, of a cool kind of excitement.

After no small degree of indecision, in the end, Hasegawa seemed to have decided on renting 『All of Hitoshi Matsuda's Forbidden Stories』.

"Ah, which reminds me. There's another one..... do they also have an anime DVD called 『Lovely Idol Tinker ☆ Tina』, I wonder?"

I desperately contained my astonishment, which would have been strong enough to make me fall down backwards if I didn't.

"Eeh!? Hasegawa, do you watch stuff like that!?"

I was so surprised that I ended up raising my voice a tad too loudly. Aah, this kind of over-reaction is creepy and makes you look like an **Otaku**, is what Koigasaki would probably say if she were here.

"No, it's for my little sister."

"Ah, I, I see....."

『Lovely Idol Tinker ☆ Tina』 was an anime aimed at little girls that aired Saturday mornings. As it was so popular among older friends, I had unconsciously forgotten that it was originally aimed at little girls, and popular with them, too.

Following that, Hasegawa brought the first volume of 『Lovely Idol Tinker ☆

Tina』 and the DVD of 『All of Hitoshi Matsuda's Forbidden Stories』 to the cashier.

After making her card, she managed to rent out what she wanted without a hitch.

I was broke, and besides, I had to study for the make-up test, so I didn't rent anything.

"Hasegawa, you like comedies? That's surprising."

"Yeah..... I happened to watch some for studying purposes and they were unexpectedly interesting."

..... studying? What kind of studying? But, Hasegawa said it in such a matter-of-fact manner that somehow, I couldn't ask her about it.

"Ah, Hasegawa, you have a little sister?"

"Yes."

"How old is she?"

"She's turning six soon."

"Oh ~. Hasegawa, you look like someone who loves kids and is good at taking care of them."

I said as I remembered the first day of school when I saw Hasegawa helping a young girl when she fell down.

"Is that so? This is the first time someone has described me as such....."

Even though she remained expressionless throughout, she wore a slightly astonished expression.

Indeed, normally, from her unsociable appearance, one wouldn't think that she would like kids.

In the meantime, we reached the station.

Thanks to the side-trip to the rental store, it became easier to talk to her, and I was just deeply relieved that things didn't become awkward after that.

"Well then, I'll be taking the subway."

"Ah, yeah..... thanks for tutoring me."

With her usual unsociable look, Hasegawa nodded lightly, and started heading towards the boarding platform for the subway.

Just a little bit more, and it seems like Hasegawa might open up to me..... I thought with a tinge of sadness.

At that moment, Hasegawa's legs stopped and she turned around. I was gazing after her leaving back without making a move and got found out.

"Erm, Kashiwada-kun. the side-trip was fun. It was the first time I've made a side-trip, so..... thank you."

Perhaps due to embarrassment, Hasegawa lowered her head as she murmured that.

"O-Oh, i-it was nothing, it was fun for me too! If you'd like..... if you'd like, we can do it again!"

I replied too rapidly from my excitement.

To think that Hasegawa would say those words to me. I was moved.

On hearing my words, Hasegawa smiled a little, and left.

After what happened today, in my heart, I swore to myself that I would study really hard until the make-up test.

On the following day and day after, Saturday and Sunday, using the notes I received from Hasegawa as a reference, I studied with single-minded focus.

Next day was the beginning of the week, Monday, the day of the make-up test.

Even in school, I continued studying earnestly for the make-up test that would take place after school.

During the break, as I was walking along the corridor heading to the toilet, I saw Hasegawa ahead walking towards me.

She was probably carrying out her duties as class rep and had a large number of printouts in her hands.

For an instant, I thought about showing Hasegawa my determination in doing my best for the make-up test, but, thinking that I might sound annoying for doing that purposely, I gave up on the thought.

As we were passing by each other.

"Good luck to your make-up test."

I turned around in surprise. Hasegawa wasn't looking at me. But, that was definitely Hasegawa's voice. To think that she found out that today was the day for my make-up test.

"T-Thank you, I'll do my best!"

I threw my voice after Hasegawa's back. Even though she didn't turn around, I made a large triumphant pose in my heart.

Getting a good feel as I worked through it, the make-up test ended without a hitch.

While feeling nothing but relief that I no longer needed to study, at the same time, the feeling of wanting to know my results quickly and the feeling of apprehension of what they might be created in me complex, mixed feelings.

Translator's Notes and References & OTARIA Glossary

1. [↑](#) **TSUTAYA**: A chain of rental stores and bookstores. [Here's how the online store looks like](#).
2. [↑](#) **Hitoshi Matsuda**: A parody of [Hitoshi Matsumoto](#), it seems.
3. [↑](#) **Linkehn**: A parody of [Lincoln \(variety show\)](#).

Chapter 3

The next day after school, I was in the neighboring class B.

I was in the middle of chatting with my **Otaku** friend from that class, Suzuki Souta, Koigasaki's crush. No matter how you look at him, Suzuki is a cool **Riajuu**, but in fact, he's one of the rare breeds that's an even more hardcore **Otaku** than me.

Koigasaki had asked me to be their in-between, but since he's a really nice guy and we have a lot to talk about, even without her, I would want to stay friends with him.

Suzuki and I flipped through the anime magazine that he'd just bought yesterday at the bookstore. There was no one left in the classroom after school, and we indulged ourselves in our **Otaku** goods.

Recently, his already brown hair had become even brighter (According to him, "it's because it's summer". The other day, Koigasaki also said, "It's summer now~ Should I go make my hair brighter ~". It seems like **Riajuu** brighten up their hair in the summer.); this dear friend of mine had been grooming himself to become cooler than ever.

Seeing a picturesque view of him reading an anime magazine thus infuriated me. No, I wasn't infuriated because he was someone I couldn't even compare myself to. It was just that I felt pathetic about my own overly lame looks.

As for me, as of late, I had been slacking on my efforts to be more stylish. No, I still styled my hair and trimmed my eyebrows, but I didn't feel like I'd levelled up in any way.

Rather, a lot had happened recently and I hadn't been paying attention to my clothing. What's more, to be frank, I didn't even have the money to buy fashion magazines, let alone new clothes. Aah, why am I so broke? The lack of money had become a rather big woe of late for me.

"My..... 『Psychicals』 is certainly the greatest anime of this season, don't you agree ~?"

Suzuki turned and said to me with an innocent smile.

『Psychicals』 is an anime that started airing this July, and among the series this season, its current BD and DVD pre-order sales are already topping the rankings. It's a story set in the near future, where the protagonist is an esper and turns into a super hero, utilizing his powers effectively to battle the forces of evil, joining hands with other characters who also have esper powers and who also turn into super heroes to fight their enemies. The well-developed characters and sophisticated plot have made the anime popular among both guys and girls.

"Aah, yeah. It's really interesting."

"Kasshii, I'm really troubled right now."

"About what?"

"I want to cosplay Psychicals!"

"Cosplay!? That's sudden."

I was a little surprised by Suzuki's sudden proclamation. I just couldn't conjure an image of a guy cosplaying in my mind.

"Well, it does seem to suit you, like the protagonist's partner, Jihn."

Jihn is a good-looking and young fellow, so I thought it was perfect a perfect fit for Suzuki.

"No, the one I want to cosplay is the protagonist, Masuaki."

Masuaki is the protagonist. It hasn't been publicly revealed, but he seems more mature. Even though his character is the hot-blooded and cool type, I felt that the handsome Jihn would suit Suzuki better.

"Well, you are good-looking, so any character will be suitable for you."

"Don't say it as if it's somebody else's problem, Kasshii. Join me! Cosplay as Jihn with me!"

"Huuh!?"

On hearing Suzuki's suggestion, I choked on the carbonated juice that I was drinking from my plastic bottle.

"Cough cough cough cough."

"On the 30th of this month, at the [TFT](#) or whatever building beside the [Big Sight](#), it seems like there will be a really big cosplay event called Cosplay Expo. My big sis told me about it. There are still more than three weeks before the 30th to prepare, so let's cosplay together!"

"If I cosplay a good-looking character, the female **Otakus** will probably flip....."

"No no, I think it suits you pretty well!"

I was troubled by the fact that Suzuki looked really serious without the tiniest doubt on his face and that I couldn't detect the faintest shred of empty flattery in his tone.

"Uhhmm..... I'll think about it when I've saved up enough for plastic surgery....."

"Hey! I'm being serious here!"

After that, Suzuki continued to persuade me, but I just let it slide.

Me cosplaying..... I've never thought about that. Moreover, with my face, if I were to cosplay a good-looking character that was popular among the girls, I couldn't complain even if I got stabbed in the back when walking alone at night.

"Ah, which reminds me, Kasshii, did you buy this month's 『Moe Kyun』?"

"Aah, my favourite series ended in last month's issue, so I didn't buy it. Besides, I have no money."

The 『Moe Kyun』 that Suzuki mentioned was a monthly **Moe**^[1] comic magazine. Though ridden with fan-service, it's a Shounen manga magazine aimed not at adults but at all ages; Suzuki and I both read the magazine so we have a lot of common topics on it.

"I thought so, right? 『Moe Kyun』 hasn't really been interesting lately. It's always the same type of manga."

"I know, I know! Stuff like having a mysterious extraterrestrial pretty girl suddenly appearing beside the protagonist, and a jealous childhood friend, right?"

"Yeah, yeah! It's still good if they are interesting, but they're all focused on the Moe factor and develop into standard harem stories, right ~!"

Tired of reading such meh developments, if they don't have any other distinctly brilliant areas, they don't feel interesting at all.

Like if the art is something I love, or if the characters are distinctly likeable, or somehow or other, like if it's really erotic, then things might be different.

At that moment, the vibration of a cellphone could be heard.

"Ah, sorry, it's mine."

Suzuki brought his phone to his ear. Seemed like he got a call.

"Hello? Yeah, at school..... huuuhh!? No way, it's impossible, eh..... no no! Aaaaaaah..... I get it! I get it, I'm going! Fine, I just have to go, right!?"

Halfway through his call, Suzuki seemed to snap somewhat and having finished, he hung up.

"Sorry, Kasshii, my big sis summons me....."

For some unknown reason, Suzuki was forced to submit to his big sister.

From what I saw just now, I wonder if it's because she has a hold on a weakness of his or something.

"Aah, it's fine. You've really got it tough."

"Sorry! I'll make it up to you!"

While saying that, Suzuki finished packing up, waved his hand at me and dashed out of the classroom.

I then went back to my classroom to get my stuff.

Will an incredible **Bishoujo** from another planet..... with an unbelievable hair color and unbelievable eye color suddenly fall from the sky on a certain day, I wonder.

Or something closer to reality, like one day gaining a beautiful big sister who's not blood-related to me, or like a cute childhood friend who'd been separated from me ten years ago visiting me.

There was a painful period up till my middle school when I was seriously considering those kinds of possibilities. However, nothing of that sort has ever happened to me in the past fifteen years, and somewhere in my heart, I knew that something like that would never happen down the road, either.

That's why I have to desperately struggle to become a more stylish **Riajuu** in order to get a cute girlfriend.

But, it was a fact that even at this moment, somewhere deep inside I was still hoping for such a miracle to happen. Because I simply couldn't completely banish such thoughts in me.

I went back to the classroom, shouldered my bag and noticed that I had a text when I checked my cellphone. As I seldom receive texts, I thought it was just another spam mail text from an e-zine, but when I flipped open my phone, I saw the name "Koigasaki Momo" displayed on the screen.

"By the way, how was your make-up test? It's all thanks to me that you got to have Hasegawa-san teach you, so I won't forgive you if you fail despite that."

Is she worried about me in her own way, I wondered.

If I closed my eyes to the lowercase characters that are scattered everywhere making the text difficult to read^[2], and the Deco-Mail^[3] which gets automatically downloaded into the data folder of my phone and can get really annoying, I was grateful for her concern.

Make-up test, huh..... I gave it everything I had, but to be frank, I can't be sure about the outcome yet.

"A delicate thing (´～`)"

I replied with just that.

The reply came before even a minute had passed. With reply speed like that, there was no need to doubt she was morbidly addicted to cellphone messaging.

"That emoticon is creepy."

That's what you want to say!?

I thought you would call me lame if I didn't include some kind of emoticon, so

I did my best adding one when I normally wouldn't, and this was what I got.

I immediately input a reply text.

At that moment, it hit me.

Since I got into high school, I had dropped by some place with a girl on our way home, had been tutored by a girl, and had started exchanging texts with a girl.

Events unthinkable for me during middle school.

If this carried on, I might not be that far off from becoming a **Riajuu**.

Even without a **Bishoujo** appearing from another dimension, I guess I might still be able to catch hold of my own happiness one day. While getting absorbed in those thoughts, I descended the stairs and, "M-Move asiiiiide!"

I could hear the yelling voice of a girl closing in from behind.

Before I could even turn around or get away, I felt a heavy impact on my back.

Unable to bear the weight, I slipped and fell, from the height of about five steps of stairs.

"That hurt....."

I sat up. I could feel a pain, as if I'd been hit by something, running along my lower back.

In the next instant, what came flying into my field of vision were.....

Panties.

A girl wearing..... panties with a polka-dot pattern was lying beside me.

With her miniskirt upturned, her panties were clearly visible.

3D girls really don't wear stripped panties, huh. That thought surfaced in my mind for only an instant, but I quickly filed it away once I'd gotten a clear look at the girl.

With her
miniskirt upturned,
her panties were
clearly visible.

She had silver hair.

Had she had golden hair instead, I would still be able to comprehend it. Unlikely as it was, there was still the possibility of a delinquent student bleaching her hair blond.

But it was silver. A hair color that was impossible for a human being.

And her clothes, too. She wore a white military-like uniform, but underneath, she wore a miniskirt. I for one had never in my life seen such bizarre attire worn in the 3D world.

And if there was anything else to add to that, it would be her face.

A beautiful, well-arranged face that could blind your eyes in a breath-taking manner.

Her skin was beautiful and her hair, silky. She had long eyelashes and the bridge of her nose was high. A slender body with proportionally large breasts, with long and slender legs sticking out from the polka-dot panties. Even in the category of **Bishoujos'**, **her figure was extraordinary.**

"One really fell from the sky....."

I unconsciously murmured.

"An extraterrestrial **Bishoujo** fell from the sky ---!"

The kind of impossible event which I was considering earlier just became reality.

No matter how I looked at it, the **Bishoujo** that was lying before me did not

look like an inhabitant of this world.

"Hn....."

Perhaps because of my earlier loud yell, the **Bishoujo** opened her eyes.

She sat up and looked at me.

Her appearance surprised me even further. Her opened eyes made her look even more beautiful, and on top of that..... they were red.

"K-Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa.....!"

Maybe she was just reacting like someone from the 2D world or something. When she realized that her panties were clearly visible, she screamed out and pushed down her skirt to hide the view.

"E-Erm!"

Ignoring me as I tried to talk to her, she hurriedly gathered her dispersed bag and something that looked like a school uniform, and left with blinding speed.

"Are you an alien? Or someone from another world? Do you understand earth language?"

My mouth just ran by itself, saying stuff that I didn't even get myself, as I gazed at her departing back with my butt still adhered to the ground.

--- wait, right from the beginning, she was saying "Move aside" in Japanese.....

And she even picked up a bag and uniform that were from this school. Is she a student here?

While still confused, I stood up, then noticed something lying on the ground in front of me.

I picked it up and saw that it was a student handbook.

Could this belong to that **Bishoujo**.....?

Anyway, I'll just return it to its rightful owner tomorrow, I thought, as I put away the student handbook into my bag.

On the following day, after school, just as I was about to head to the student handbook owner's class to return it, "Kashiwada, I want you to come somewhere with me!"

Koigasaki came all the way to my seat.

"Ehh? Wait a minute....."

It must be something to do with Suzuki, I thought, as I frantically shouldered my bag, left the classroom and followed after Koigasaki. It was rare for this girl to talk to me unless it concerned Suzuki. after all.

"Eh, what? You have something else to do?"

Koigasaki halted suddenly and turned towards me with a seemingly irritated face.

Aah, it would be troublesome if I resist. It might be okay to just return the student handbook tomorrow. Student handbook owner, please forgive me.

"Not really. So, where are we going?"

"I've thought about it. The reason why I still don't find the **Otaku** anime and manga I've been asking you about interesting."

Koigasaki suddenly started while we were walking along the corridor.

"Hey, don't talk about such topics here."

I frantically looked around. There were many students walking about. I wished she would be more considerate about my closet **Otaku** status.

"Eh, aah, you're afraid of people knowing? Oh, yeah, right, and I got it! It's because you are a guy, and the ani..... the stuff that you recommended me are stuff you find interesting from a guy's point of view, right? That's the problem. The things that girls find interesting are quite different from the things guys find interesting, right? The girls in the games and anime that you recommended are the **Moe**-type girls that will never exist in real life, appearing one after another showing their panties, or those that involve adventuring and fighting enemies..... there isn't really anything I would find interesting in those!"

"Well, I guess so....."

I pretty much recommended everything that Suzuki was into, but he liked the stuff that were highly popular with guys, and that might be why Koigasaki didn't find any of them interesting.

"That's why I've given some thought to this, that I also want a female **Otaku** friend!"

This girl always thinks of some crazy stuff.

"If you make a female **Otaku** friend, you might get some recommendations which are popular with girls but..... I don't think you will become a **Fujoshi**..... I guess you might be able to get into **Otomege**, since you like **Shoujo manga**."

I had once looked at an **Otomege**, a type of dating sim geared towards girls, that my little sister was playing, and with romance contents that appealed to a girl's ideal. It seemed similar to those **Shoujo manga**.

Since Koigasaki is a romantic who likes **Shoujo manga**, she might just like that kind of game.

"What's that, **Otomege**, you say?"

"Don't keep spouting **Otaku** terminology so openly."

"Weren't you the one who just mentioned it openly yourself!?"

"Eh, aah..... but then again, even if you get into **Otomege**, you won't really have anything in common with Suzuki to talk about..... Suzuki prefers the stuff that's popular with guys..... Which reminds me, where are you heading right now?"

Koigasaki never stopped walking during the conversation. Which reminds me, right from the beginning, she did say something like, "I want you to come somewhere with me".

"We've arrived."

Koigasaki stopped in front of the door to a certain classroom.

There was a label on the door that read 『Manga Research Club』.

"Manga research ~ !?"

"I might be able to find a female **Otaku** here!"

"This isn't funny! If I join the club..... my **Otaku** secret will be out right away! I definitely won't join!"

I lowered my volume when it came to the "**Otaku**" part as I started putting up my resistance.

"I haven't decided to join yet. I'm just here to take a look!"

Just as Koigasaki prepared to knock on the door,

We heard voices from inside the room and pricked up our ears.

"No, I really did see her! A really cute girl with silver hair, wearing a white military uniform in this room!"

Silver hair, white military uniform.....?

They were the same distinct features of the **Bishoujo** who came falling from above yesterday.

"Were you daydreaming? There's no way a girl like that would exist in the real world."

"No, I clearly saw her! The instant I opened the door to the clubroom, the **Bishoujo** was surprised, took to her heels and ran away!"

At that moment, the door suddenly opened and out came a person.

"Ahh, sorry."

The person who had suddenly opened the door and come out of the manga research clubroom apologized for startling us. It was an earnest looking girl with black hair that left her neck in two tied up tails..... her face looks kind of familiar.....

"Aah!"

Before I could say anything, the girl looked at my face and cried out.

"You, are yesterday's....."

She looked intently at me, all color drained from her face.

"Ahh, I remember. This is your student handbook!"

I searched through my pocket for the student handbook that I'd picked up yesterday, and handed it to the female student. She was the same girl as the one on the picture.

"First year class D, Sakurai Azuki"

The photo on the student handbook was the plain, earnest, commonplace face of a female student.

"Erm, sorry, but there's something I want to ask you, so could you please come with me?"

"Eh, me?"

The female student spoke to me with an anxious look.

She walked off briskly and I had no choice but to follow along. When I turned my head around, I saw Koigasaki looking at us with a disgruntled look.

The female student stopped at the bottom of the flight of stairs she'd just descended, looked around to see if anyone was around, and slowly spoke up.

"I-I'm sorry about yesterday.....! I knocked into you and didn't even apologize....."

A question mark appeared above my head.

"Yesterday..... about?"

"Ehh, you don't remember!? Could it be that you got knocked on the head and lost your memories....."

The female student looked at me with a worried look. Her face was somewhat hidden by her long fringes, but on closer inspection, it was a very well-ordered face. It might even have given off a different impression from the face in the photo. Something was bugging me, like I'd seen her somewhere before.....

"..... ehh, could it be that..... you were the extraterrestrial **Bishoujo** that fell out of the sky!?"

That's right, she really looked like that mysterious, silver haired **Bishoujo** who'd been clad in a military uniform. Of course, the **Bishoujo** yesterday was

really more beautiful, but there did seem to be a resemblance in their facial features.

"Extraterrestrial.....? What are you talking about....."

All of a sudden, the female student drew back a little with a baffled expression. Crap, it's like she's creeped out. At that moment, I noticed something incredible.

Her chest was huge.

The face that extended out the top of her uniform was plain and homely, but on closer look, she had pretty huge breasts.

A girl with such huge breasts isn't an everyday sight in the real world. Frankly speaking, when it comes to Koigasaki, I could tell from her uniform that she hardly had anything.

The only noteworthy huge breasts that I had seen recently..... would be those of the silver haired **Bishoujo** from yesterday.

"The **Bishoujo** from yesterday i-is really you!"

I somehow managed to realize it in an instant judging by the size of her breasts; since it can't be helped that I'm a big breast lover.

"Eh, you only just realized it.....!?"

The female student looked at me with incredulous eyes.

Well, it was because she looked too different. While her figure and face were not too different, yesterday, I had the impression that she was a peerless beauty, but today, her level was more akin to, "if you look at her closely, she seems kind of cute".

"But your clothing is way too different from yesterday....."

"Aah..... that's because I was cosplaying, for a reason....."

"Cosplaying!?"

"Please don't say it so loudly!"

The female student looked around her a few times.

I see, she was cosplaying. Well, that makes sense. If I think about it calmly, other than cosplaying, there's no way a silver-haired girl wearing a military uniform could exist.....

"Then, that hair and those eyes....."

"Of course, I used a wig and colored contacts."

I s-see..... That makes sense. If not for that, a girl with that kind of appearance in the real world would make the headlines.....

Yesterday, I was excited by the prospect of having a real outer space **Bishoujo** falling down from the sky, and might have been out of it.

Due to the great shock, so to speak, that I received when we first met, I could see nothing short of a peerless beauty, but in truth, if I had looked more closely, I might have found her to be just at the "if you look at her closely, she seems kind of cute" level, I thought, while studying the girl before me. The impression I got yesterday was simply too different.

"Then again, why were you doing that kind of cosplay in school.....?"

I wondered why, even though she was a girl I'd just met, somehow, maybe because she was also an **Otaku**, it was easy for me to talk to her.

"..... I was actually cosplaying by myself in the manga research room....."

"Haah..... so why in the world would you....."

"Since there weren't any club activities yesterday, I thought no one would come..... so I was thinking of taking my own pictures with a self-timer..... then for some reason, one of the guy members came into the clubroom, and I got frantic and escaped..... Aah, jeez, I'm such an idiot, really an idiot..... why did I do such a thing....."

So the male student in the manga research clubroom was referring to this earlier.

She suddenly entered into her own world and started berating herself, so I found it hard to respond. Rather, why did she use polite language when we are both of the same age.

"Please, don't tell anyone about what you saw yesterday! I have been keeping

my cosplaying hobby a secret from both my friends and the guys in the club."

"Eh, haah....."

While I didn't know much about cosplay, wouldn't one normally do it with her **Otaku** friends? She's really a weirdo for keeping it a secret even from her friends.

"That's all. Sorry for the suddenness. I've kept the girl who's with you waiting..... you should go ba....."

Just as she was about to say 'you should go back', a familiar face popped out from above the stairs.

"Koigasaki!"

"It's not like I came here to eavesdrop! Since you were taking so long, I thought, I should just go back, and as I'm coming down the stairs, there you guys are..... I just happened to hear some of it..... Ah, I'm not the kind of person who likes to let my mouth run loose all right!?"

Koigasaki frantically said in a seemingly awkward manner to the female student.

"So what happened to joining the manga research club?"

"It was full of just guys when I peeked through the window, so I gave up."

"Wha....."

It's just like her, and what one would expect from Koigasaki since she can't deal well with guys but.....

"Cu....."

"Eh?"

The female student..... erm, Sakurai, right? Sakurai-san seemed to have uttered something. A question mark appeared above both my and Koigasaki's head.

"Cuuuuuuuttttee!"

"Ehh.....?"

I doubted my ears. Was the nearby shout just now really coming from the same person who'd been subduing her voice and practically whispering when she talked?

"I couldn't really take a close look earlier, but..... aren't you really pretty! You are such a beautiful girl that it's unthinkable you're a product of this 3D world!"

Sakurai-san approached Koigasaki excitedly, her eyes shining.

"Eh, erm, that's....."

I thought Koigasaki would be creeped out, but contrary to expectations, she appeared a little bashfully happy from the praise.

"What you just said about coming to learn about the manga research club, are you hesitating if you should join?"

Sakurai-san kept using polite language when speaking to me, but with Koigasaki she easily switched to casual speech.

"Yeah. I was thinking of making a female **Otaku** friend, so I came to take a look at the manga research club. Are you a member?"

"Yeah, I'm a member, but I rarely come to club activities these days..... Most of the members are guys, and while there are girl members, they only show up every now and then. you want to make **Otaku** friends, meaning you're an **Otaku**? You certainly don't look the part!"

"I haven't really become a real **Otaku** yet, but I'm kind of fascinated and wanted to become one. So I thought that if I had a female **Otaku** friend, I could get some recommendations on what to get into, but I'm kind of depressed now that I've found out the manga research club is full of guys....."

"I see! If you're ok with me, I can recommend you a lot of things!"

"Really!? Seriously!? That'll be really great help ~! I'm Koigasaki Momo from first year class A! You can just call me Momo!"

"I'm Sakurai Azuki from first year class D! Nice to meet you, Momo-chan!"

For some reason, they got really riled up and started talking non-stop to each other. I'm here, right? Have they forgotten about me? There's a limit to playing ignorant.

"But you know, Momo-chan, you're really cute! You're **Moe** ~! As a female **Otaku** who's fond of **Bishoujos**, I'm really getting hyped up here!"

Sakurai-san excitedly admired Koigasaki. I'd heard that there were many female **Otakus** who love **Bishoujos**. Seems like it's true.

Before I knew it, Koigasaki and Sakurai-san had exchanged contacts.

"Oh, did you also exchange contacts with Kashiwada?"

When Koigasaki said that, Sakurai-san's expression stiffened for an instant.

"Ah, no..... I didn't, did I?"

I fully received the "I don't really want to, though" message from Sakurai-san's body language. However, what can I do? If I replied with a "You don't really need to force yourself if you don't want to" it would sound like I was being sarcastic. Wait, are you switching to polite language with me again?

Left without a choice, both Sakurai-san and I forced ourselves to exchange our numbers. Aah, I guess she'll probably delete it once she gets home.....

"Kashiwada is pretty knowledgeable about **Otaku** matters, too. I think you guys will have a lot to talk about ~"

Said Koigasaki idly.

"Uhn..... I wonder about that. I don't really know much about the stuff that's popular with guys....."

[File:Otaria v02
067.jpg](#)

She was really
quick in deploying
her A.T field.

She was really quick in deploying her A.T field^[4].

I could easily tell that while she wanted to become friends with Koigasaki, she wasn't interested in becoming friends with me.....

"Oh yeah, hey Momo-chan, let's cosplay together next time ~!"

"C-cosplay!?"

"Yeah, I think any kind of costume will suit you!"

Once the topic left me for an instant, the two of them immediately resumed their conversation.

"Ah..... I just remembered I have something urgent to see to, so I need to go....."

I couldn't stand staying there any longer.

"Eh, Kashiwada, are you leaving?"

"Yeah, see you."

I smiled wryly, made an apt wave of my hand, and left the place.

*

I reached the local station, looked at my cellphone, and saw that I'd gotten a text from Koigasaki.

"Azuki-chan invited me to cosplay at a cosplay event held at a place in [Odaiba](#) on the 30th of this month. Do you know what kind of event that is?"

"....."

I was surprised. Judging by the place and day, isn't this the same cosplay event that Suzuki talked about yesterday? What a well-timed coincidence.

Azuki-chan must be referring to Sakurai-san, I guess. Is that her given name? I can't remember.

However, just because the event is in Odaiba doesn't necessarily mean it's the very same event. Maybe there are two different events at Odaiba on the same day.

Since I was the kind who was slow at texting over the phone, I called her up.

"Hello, Kashiwada? What's up?"

"About the event where you're cosplaying, is it at a building called TFT or something that's just next to the Big Sight?"

"Ah ~ right, right, Azuki-chan did mention something like that. Why?"

"Aah, well, I was also invited by Suzuki. He asked me to cosplay with him at the cosplay event held at TFT on the 30th of this month."

"Ehh!? Invited by Suzuki-kun!?"

When Suzuki's name came up, her tone suddenly went up a notch. She was so easy to read.

"You were invited by Suzuki-kun to cosplay..... that means, you will be cosplaying together with Suzuki-kun!?"

"No, I haven't decided if I'll do it yet....."

"Then, then, does that mean I can feign coincidence by going to the event, and get to see Suzuki-kun!?"

She wasn't listening to me.

"Crap, I'm getting hyped!"

"Which reminds me..... It didn't work out for you the other time, right?"

About two months ago, Suzuki was asked by his friend to help out at an 'Only' event, and Koigasaki had planned to pretend meeting Suzuki by coincidence and even cosplayed as a character that Suzuki likes. The end result was, well, everything was over before she even got to talk to him.

"This time round, I will be attending as a fellow cosplayer, and I think it will be easier to talk to him than last time! I will definitely not let history repeat itself! I will definitely talk to him!"

"Then why don't I just let Suzuki know that you are also cosplaying, and the four of us can go to the event together. Won't that be much easier....."

"Ehh!? If we do that and get turned down, then everything would be over right away! And Suzuki's impression of me isn't really good, either....."

I-Indeed.....

Also, Suzuki did clearly say, "Let's go cosplay together (the two of us) and have some fun".....

"Besides, Azuki-chan....."

"Eh?"

Koigasaki seemed like she wanted to say something, but even when I prompted her to continue, she didn't tell me a thing.

"Well, let's just go with the 'pretend that it's all a coincidence and bump into each other at the venue'! I've decided! I will cosplay a character that Suzuki-kun likes and this time round, I will definitely talk to him! Make sure you tell me which character he likes! And also, make sure you cover for me properly on the day itself!"

"Hey, wait a minute. Aren't you assuming it's a given that I'll be cosplaying with Suzuki!?"

"Of course. Didn't we have an agreement to cooperate with each other? Rather, who do you think you've got to thank for getting Hasegawa-san to help you out in your studies!"

Uwu..... When she brought that up, I had no choice but to oblige.

"..... kuh, I get it."

With this, for the first time in my life, I shall have a go at cosplaying.

Translator's Notes and References

1. [↑](#) **Moe:** 'Moe' is an Otaku term that has no strict definitions. It general means 'cute', 'turn-on', or even 'fappable'. See [here](#) for more information.
2. [↑](#) **Japanese lowercase:** In Japanese writing, lowercase characters are actually smaller-sized characters that are a quarter the size of a normal character in a properly handwritten script, but usually just half the size of a normal character in electronic fonts. Putting aside the variety of uses for such characters which will make this note too long, Koigasaki is using lowercase characters for all extended vowel sounds (which is unnecessarily or even incorrect academically-speaking), *e.g.* そういえば becomes そういえば, and どうだった becomes どうだった, *etc. etc.*
3. [↑](#) **DecoMail:** For more info on Dekome, *i.e.* DecoMail (Decoration Mail), you can take a look at [this site](#) which pretty much sums it up.
4. [↑](#) **A.T field:** An A.T. Field (short for "Absolute Terror Field") is a nearly impenetrable force-field barrier which Angels and Evangelions can generate. Check out Evangelion if you are clueless about it.

Chapter 4

Immediately after sending a message to Suzuki telling him that I agreed to cosplay, I received his delighted reply. The only thing was, I convinced him that I wasn't going to cosplay the good-looking character, that I was going to do the protagonist Masuaki (Pops), and that he was going to do the partner of the protagonist, Jihn (hawt guy). In my room, I searched the Internet for information on how to get my hands on the costumes needed for cosplay, and a number of online stores selling cosplay costumes came up.

Clothes at 10,000 yen, boots at 5000 yen.....

And on top of that, I still have to put on a wig?

I'm already so broke. Only at this juncture, feelings of regret for having so lightly agreed to cosplay started welling up in me.

"Koigasaki, come over for a sec."

After school the following day, I called out to Koigasaki.

"Eh, what is it? Where to?"

"Computer lab."

"Computer lab ~? For what....."

I forcibly brought the grumbling Koigasaki out of the classroom.

The computer lab at our school is basically open and free for anyone to use after school.

Luckily, we found no one using the computer lab when we came in, so I breathed a sigh of relief and turned on a PC.

"There's something I want to show you."

I immediately connected to the internet and went to the cosplay costume site that I'd visited yesterday.

"Here, take a look at this. It's a site that sells cosplay costumes."

"Heiyhy ~! You looked it up? You're pretty sensible sometimes ~."

"Look at it carefully, the price!"

"..... eh....."

All the costumes showed on the site cost more than 10,000 yen each.

"For real.....? Why is it so expensive? I don't get it! It's enough for me to buy a dress at [Liz](#) or [McBee](#)!"

"It's not just this. You have to buy shoes and accessories separately, so it can add up to over 20 grand, can't it?"

"20 grand ~!? I hardly even spend so much money on clothes! Why is it so pricey ~!?"

"You get it now, right? Cosplay takes a lot of money. Now what?"

My plan was to get Koigasaki to give up on cosplaying.

Of course, I also wanted to support Koigasaki in her love journey. I wasn't very keen to cosplay, but was considering to do it for her sake.

..... until I saw the prices of the cosplay costumes.

Even though it wasn't good to put a price tag on friendship, it couldn't be helped.

"I-It just so happens that the costumes at this shop are expensive, right!? The LoveMinus uniform I bought was just around 5000 yen!"

"Eh.....? That costume was so cheap.....?"

"Yeah, at the online merchant's site, it said something like 'Sexy cute Love●nus-feel cosplay!' with a blanked out character, and even though I also checked out other cosplay sites, that one was selling it for really cheap so I bought it right away."

..... sexy cute? Even though LoveMinus uniforms aren't particularly revealing..... Don't tell me what Koigasaki bought was actually for night-time cosplay..... If she knew about it, she would get all worked up, so I gave up the thought of filling her in.

At that moment.

"Ah ~ Momo-chan, so you're here ! *When I asked around in your classroom, someone said she'd heard you mention going to the computer lab !*"

The door to the computer lab opened, and Sakurai-san entered.

She was approaching Koigasaki happily, but her face stiffened instantly when she noticed me. What's with that giveaway reaction? This goes beyond sadness and makes me feel empty, you know?

"Oh, it's Azuki-chan!"

"Eh, you're looking at cosplay costumes!? I only asked you about it yesterday and you're already searching for costumes..... Momo-chan, you're really motivated, aren't you!? I'm really happy ~!"

Appearing deeply moved, Sakurai-san hugged Koigasaki. Hey hey, you girls are having too much physical contact..... well, since seeing two girls clinging to each other is therapeutic for the eyes, I'll let it go.

"Momo-chan, have you already decided what character to cosplay!? If you have, I'll make my cosplay match yours! Ah, this site sells cosplay costumes? Uwaah, the costumes here aren't too faithful, huh. The skirt is also of the wrong color. Like I thought, costumes from shops aren't really that good ~. Some of the ones out there are pretty elaborate, but this shop's no good."

Sakurai-san looked over the site's inventory, and, for some reason, started criticizing.

As far as I could see, there didn't seem to be that many problems, though.

"So this shop carries poorly made costumes despite the high prices?"

Answering Koigasaki's question, Sakurai-san said.

"High prices? No, for ready-made goods, I'd say this shop's rather more on the cheap side, isn't it?"

"Ehh..... for real!?"

Koigasaki clearly got a shock from that. All right, that's one more damper.

"Aside from the costume, you still have to buy stuff like wigs, you know, Koigasaki. Do you have that much money?"

"Uwuu..... W-Wig? I can go with my real hair. If I find a character whose hair style resembles mine, I can just go with my real hair, right?"

Koigasaki rebuked with an agonized look. Real hair? I see, there's that way too..... If you cosplay with your own hair, then you can save on that.

"Real hair.....?"

However, at that moment, a low voice that had never been heard till now resounded in the computer lab.

Of course, I couldn't make that kind of a voice, and neither could Koigasaki. Which left us with.....

"Eh? A-Azuki-chan?"

"Cosplaying with real hair is un-freakin-believable!"

Sakurai-san denounced for all its worth.

Sakurai-san's frenzied expression that made her look like a different person from before caused us to shrink back quite a bit.

"With respect to 3D cosplaying, there are some held views that deem it's totally okay to use your real hair or perhaps, it might even be more natural and thus better to use your real hair, but, when it comes to 2D cosplaying, wearing wigs is the way to go!"

"For real..... is that so?"

"Wait, what on earth is 3D cosplaying.....?"

"3D cosplaying refers to cosplaying celebrities or real people! Characters from live action films, dramas, or idols."

"Heiyhy , *so there are those, too !*"

I'd always thought that cosplay wasn't limited to just manga and anime and other 2D stuff, but I never suspected it was this broad.

"Erhmm, for example..... this!"

Sakurai-san fiddled with the PC for a bit and showed the screen to Koigasaki and me (more like, probably just Koigasaki).

The words 『Cosplay Community CUTE』showed on the screen, which seemed to be a social networking site. There were various Cosplay photographs on display.

"This person isn't wearing any wig nor color contacts, right?"

Said Sakurai-san as she pointed to a photograph. Indeed, the girl in the photograph wasn't wearing a wig, and her eyes were black. But she was wearing a cosplay outfit and was somewhat cute.

"The next one is another person cosplaying the same character."

The next picture Sakurai-san showed us featured another girl wearing the same cosplay outfit of the same character.

Even though it was the same character with the same costume, she gave off a completely different impression.

The first was just wearing a cosplay costume, while this one gave off an aura that resembled more of a 2D character even though she was 3D.

"With a wig and color contacts, the cosplay is perfect. It's completely different, right!?"

"You're right..... a wig and color contacts can actually make it so different, huh....."

"More like, the make-up is thick at the level of a **Gyaru**!? And it's well done on top of that! The fake eyelashes are the same color as the wig!? Amazing!"

Just as Koigasaki pointed out, the girl in the photograph had firmly attached pink eyelashes, the same color as her wig.

"They have coloured eyelashes for use in cosplay these days."

Sakurai-san said proudly.

"You can tell from this, right!? The quality changes a lot with just a wig and some color contacts!"

"Indeed! But aren't color contacts expensive? I've bought black contacts to make my eyes bigger, and those alone were pretty expensive, as I recall....."

Black contacts to make the eyes bigger referred to those black-rimmed

contacts that could make one's eyes appear to be bigger, I supposed. When I bought my contacts, I kind of remembered seeing them on a leaflet.

"Well, they cost about 5000 yen, I think."

"5000..... by the way, the wig is also expensive, right.....?"

"It depends, but it's around 4000 to 8000 yen, I think."

Color contacts and wig..... do they cost that much? The costume alone is already pretty expensive.....

"For real ~..... that could be a problem..... I've been spending too much money lately and my Mom hasn't been giving me any pocket money....."

Koigasaki was on the same train of thought as me and started muttering. Everything seemed to have returned to the state before Sakurai-san had entered the computer lab. In the end, the problem lied there.

"Money, huh ~..... ah, then Momo-chan, why don't you work with me part-time at a maid cafe!?"

Sakurai-san's eyes suddenly sparkled and she grabbed Koigasaki's hand.

"Maid cafe.....?"

Koigasaki's eyes blinked.

"That's right! I've always been fascinated about working in a maid cafe! But I thought it'd be a little scary to work there by myself....."

"Maid cafe, huh..... indeed, those frilly dresses look cute, and I'd considered wearing them at least once, but..... in those places, don't you have to act like a hostess and chat a lot with the male customers.....? I can't really deal well with guys....."

"That's not true ~! I've only been to one once, but it's just like a normal cafe with a maid costume worn as uniform by the shop attendants!"

"Is that so.....? But I've never worked part-time before. I wonder whether I can do it....."

Despite her looks, Koigasaki is a rich man's daughter and seems to have led a rather sheltered life. I wonder if she could really handle a part-time job.

"It'll be fine! Momo-chan, you look like a capable person! Besides, since you're fascinated with **Otakus**, you can gain **Otaku** knowledge while working at a maid cafe, and can also earn some money on top of that! That's like killing two birds with one stone!"

..... well, indeed, both shop attendants and customers would comprise largely of **Otakus**. But it was still very much doubtful to me whether Koigasaki, who was already no good with normal guys, could work at such a place without a hitch.

"I-Indeed....."

"Right, right!? Then, why don't we just get on with it and visit some maid cafes in Akiba!? Even though I've been fascinated with working in maid cafes, I've only visited once, and since we'll be working at one, I'd like to take a look at how they operate! We can decide if we'll work there or not after taking a look!"

"Yeah, if it's just taking a look for now....."

Koigasaki working part-time at a maid cafe..... what's with this incredible development?

"Then, let's go!"

Sakurai-san pulled Koigasaki's hand.

It was an incomprehensible development, but there was no opportunity for me to stop them so it couldn't be helped.

"See you....."

After sending them off, I will go home by myself.

If things continue to progress in the same vein, even if I don't do anything else for Koigasaki, Sakurai-san will teach her everything from A to Z about **Otakus**.

Compared to a lame guy like me who Koigasaki also generally can't deal well with because of the gender, it's probably more fun to hang out with another girl like Sakurai-san.

My role is almost over, I guess.....

"Huuh!? What are you talking about!?"

"Ehh.....!?"

I uttered in surprise as I looked up.

Koigasaki was looking at me in indignation.

"What makes you think you can go back by yourself!? Come along with us!"

"Ehh, I-I'm going along with you!? Are you sure!? wait, that's not it! Why me!"

Confused, I myself didn't know what I was talking about.

"Isn't it dangerous for two frail girls to go to a maid cafe!? You're a guy, going by gender at least, so come along with us!"

A guy, going by gender at least..... so in what other respects am I not a guy?

More like, the two of you don't look frail at all.....

"I-It can't be helped then, if you insist that much. I don't really feel like it, but I guess I'll go."

"? Why are you grinning? It's creepy....."

"It's not like I'm grin....."

Before I could finish, I remembered the existence of Sakurai-san.

When I looked at her, she had a pair of deadpan eyes staring back at me.

Uwah, why is he coming along? Are you freaking kidding me? Read the atmosphere, for Pete's sake, you damn slime, were what her eyes were saying.

"Ah, maybe I shouldn't....."

"Then, let's go Azuki-chan!"

"..... ah, yeah, let's go."

With that, holding hands, the two of them started walking along the corridor.

Two girls holding hands, is that for real.....?

Well, I couldn't be bothered anymore. Keeping quiet, I followed after the two

of them.

Along the journey from the station nearest the school to Akihabara, we managed to kill the time with the two girls prattling with eeks and yipes, and an occasional chime in or retort from me. Even though I was crushed by the fact that I could hardly get into their conversation, which made me feel like going home, somehow, I could feel that I was getting used to this company of three.

"Wooww ~ it's Akiba ! *I'm getting so riled up !*"

As we came out of the Electric Town Exit of Akihabara station, Sakurai-san's eyes sparkled at the sight of the Akihabara streets.

"Azuki-chan, do you know where you can find a maid cafe?"

"Yeah, I know! For now, there are two cafes that I'm shooting for, so let's go there!"

"You've already set your sight on a couple of places! That'll speed things up!"

A few months ago, Suzuki and I had visited a maid cafe as well, but among the maid cafes in Akihabara, the one we visited could be thought of as pretty famous.

We played games, chatted, and also sang and danced with the maids on stage.

I wondered whether that was something different from the maid cafes that Sakurai-san had set her sights on.

With Sakurai-san guiding us, we reached the front of a multi-tenant building that was right in the middle of a maze-like road.

It was a place where I had never been before, a place that I did not know about.

It was only thanks to a maid cafe signboard that read 『Maid Cafe・Secret Room in the Attic』 that we got to know that a maid cafe was there; frankly, without that signboard, it would be nearly impossible to notice its

inconspicuous existence.

"Is there really a maid cafe here?"

"It's on the third floor ~."

Following after Sakurai-san, we climbed the narrow stairs and opened the door on the third floor.

"Welcome home, Sir, Madams."

Immediately upon opening the door, there, stood maid waitresses.

Clad in maid uniforms with a chic design themed in black, long skirts that extended to their knees, and their black hair tied up into buns, the maids stood there with an air of serenity.

With gentle smiles, and an adult-like, classy, elegant manner of speech. They were beauties, but wore only make-up that wasn't overly thick.

It was as if they were real maids who were working in a western style mansion.

Frankly, they were very much different from the image I had of maids in maid cafes.

They were a full 180 degrees difference from those glitzy brown-haired maids in short skirts giving off a modern atmosphere, handing out fliers or shouting out promotions in the streets of Akihabara.

Of course, I'm not trying to say one is better than the other; it all depends on individual preferences, but personally, I definitely prefer the maids with an orthodox feel that we saw here.

"Allow me to guide you to your seats."

We were guided by an orthodox maid waitress. The internal decor of the shop further surprised me. The shop was narrow, and the elaborate decors made the place an extraordinary look-alike to a room in a mansion. The interior and small articles felt refined, making me forget that this was actually a unit in a multi-tenant building.

"Is this the first time you are 'coming home' to 'a room in the attic'?"

She asked us once we took our seats. Yes, answered Sakurai-san. I thought she'd have come here before, since this was a place she'd set her sights on, but it seemed to be her first time.

The maid handed us a menu, and we opened it.

Even each and every single item on the menu had a surprisingly elaborate name.

I was short on money, but I just had to try something after coming all the way here. I ordered a coffee and cake set. Koigasaki and Sakurai-san also made their respective orders.

"I saw good reviews on this maid cafe on the Internet and I've been wanting to come here at least once ~!"

Sakurai-san said ecstatically.

"I'm freaking surprised to find it so different from the one I saw on TV last time."

Koigasaki said while turning her head around to survey the shop.

"It's also totally different from the maid cafe I've been to....."

"This shop has a concept about maids waiting for the return of their master in a room in the attic. While you can't talk to the maids beyond what's necessary nor play games with them, they are very they are very careful in maintaining the setting, and even when you listen to the conversations between the maids, you will only hear maid-talk that is in character with the setting, I heard! The unique atmosphere of this cafe where one can escape reality is quite the hot topic right now!"

I see. Somehow, I can see how this can become a topic of discussion.

In an instant, the image I'd had on maid cafes had been turned right on its head. Different from the usually noisy maid cafes, the space here was calming and soothing.

"Sorry for the wait."

Our orders arrived.

"Even the food here is prepared by the maids!"

Sakurai-san said in a soft voice after the maid left. I brought a scoop of the food I'd ordered to my mouth.

"Delicious....."

I took a bite of the cake and was honestly surprised.

I thought that the maids were the main attraction in places like these and they would skimp on the food, so I was really surprised by how much more delicious it was than what I was expecting.

"This shop, is really wonderful."

Koigasaki praised the shop. It seemed like Koigasaki was also positively impressed by the shop.

"We sincerely await your homecoming."

Finally, the maids bowed their heads deeply and we put the shop behind us.

"If it's that kind of shop, I'd like to try working there ~!"

Koigasaki said immediately after exiting the shop.

"I know, right!?"

Indeed, if it is that shop, from the feel of it, Koigasaki won't need to spend long periods of time talking to male customers, and she might just be able pull it off even if she can't deal well with the opposite sex.

Wait, why do I need to get so worried about her.....

No wait, Koigasaki just doesn't look like she'd fit in with those orthodox-looking maids. If she worked there, she'd probably stand out like a sore thumb.....

"On another note, the other shop I'm interested in should be pretty close ~! Is it okay to go take a look?"

"Yeah, let's go see!"

Upon hearing Koigasaki's reply, Sakurai-san looked at the map on her cellphone and started leading us to the shop.

After five minutes of walking around in a trial and error manner, we arrived at yet another multi-tenant building.

"Ah, here it is ~!"

"『**Yandere**^[1] Cafe, Last Supper』..... wait, what kind of shop name is this!?"

Affixed to the window of the second floor of the building were words of what appeared to be the name of the shop, and having read them aloud, I realized it was some outrageously crazy shop name.

"What's **Yandere**?"

Koigasaki asked us with an innocent face, like that of an unsullied child.

"Erhm, to put it simply, it's a character who's sick."

That's waaaay toooo simple!

As a **Yandere** lover, I just couldn't let Sakurai-san's explanation pass like that.

"A **Yandere** is one of the extremely popular character archetypes in games, manga, or other 2D media, and describes a character with overly strong feelings of love. As the story progresses, she eventually becomes mentally sick....."

"Mentally sick? Such a character can be popular? I don't get how **Otakus** think....."

A crease appeared between Koigasaki's eyebrows, an unconvinced look on her face.

"But, what the heck is a **Yandere** cafe!? What is the meaning of a **Yandere** maid cafe!? In the first place, **Yandere** being confined to the 2D world is what makes it good..... Rather, for argument's sake, even if I close my eyes to the '**Yandere** Cafe' part, what's the meaning of 'last supper'!? Will I die!?"

"From what I gather from its homepage, the maid staff in this shop all seem to be **Yanderes**, and it seems really interesting....."

It was unusual for Sakurai-san to respond to my remarks.

"At any rate, we'll know once we go in right?"

Taking the vanguard, Koigasaki entered this shop which looked suspicious from the outside.

We climbed the stairs, opened the door and entered.

"Welcome home, masters."

The instant we opened the door, we saw the maid waitresses standing there.

Thinking that some dreadful maids might appear since this was called a Yandere cafe, I put myself on guard, but what greeted by normal cute maids with no remarkable peculiarities.

They were clad in cute Gothic-style maid clothing with lots of frills and skirts that were above knee-length. The red color of the maid uniforms..... was it just a coincidence, or was there a deeper meaning behind it.....

Smiling, the maids guided us to our seats.

The inside of the shop was a bit dark, and decorations of roses and skulls formed the motif design of the interior, giving it a feel of eeriness, combined with a western-style Gothic atmosphere.

We opened the menu after we sat down.

Overall, the selection didn't differ much from a normal cafe, but, regrettably, there were also three out-of-place items present on the menu: 『●

Crystallization of a Maid's Love (Vanilla Ice-cream) 600 Yen

..... a maid's love is sweet like ice-cream and pure like the white of vanilla.』

『● Tears of a Maid's Love (Grapefruit Juice) 500 Yen

..... this might be..... the tears shed by the maid who witnessed your infidelity with that woman, Master.』

『● Lifeblood of a Woman (Tomato Juice) 500 Yen

..... Master, where did you think that woman you love has gone to recently? Uwufufufufuh.....』

Don't tell me that with just some arbitrarily chosen items on the menu and an interior giving off a horror feel, they thought that they could pass this off as a **Yandere** cafe?

It's a bit too much if they think they can satisfy **Yandere** lovers with just this.

"Hey, even now, I still don't get what **Yandere** means, so to speak....."

Koigasaki muttered discontentedly.

"Uhn..... this shop is more normal than I thought..... it's a little disappointing."

Sakurai-san said in a regrettable tone. I wonder what on earth she was expecting from this shop.

Following that, Koigasaki suggested that she might be able to grasp something about **Yanderes** if she ordered from the **Yandere** special menu, and so, she ordered the 『Lifeblood of a Woman』, then complained about not getting why it cost 500 yen; the standard of that tomato juice was splendid in its own way.

"Like I thought, I really hate tomato juice....."

"Then why did you order it!?"

Koigasaki sipped her juice with a disgusted face, while Sakurai-san and I put our mouths to the soft drinks we ordered. As Sakurai-san and Koigasaki started talking, the maid closest to us spoke.

"Sir and Madams, are you going back to school?"

Following that, the maid asked us about school, and we (mainly Koigasaki and Sakurai-san) responded in kind.

The broadly smiling maid gave off a good feel, and the conversation took off.

Following that, about 30 minutes went by. When we were coming in, the maid had explained that there would be an additional charge after 30 minutes, so, as the broke high school students that we were, we stood up from our seats before we incurred the fee and headed to the cashier.

"Thank you very much for your patronage. The total will be 1300 yen."

Just as we were done with the payment,

"Oh my? Sir and Madams....."

From behind, the maid waitress who'd been spending time talking to us earlier called out to us.

"Ah, thank you for earlier....."

Thinking that she was just bidding us goodbye, I responded politely in kind.

"Are you already going out?"

By the way, it seemed like by 'going out', she was referring to exiting the shop. Since the shop was supposed to be a home in the setting, we were welcome back when we entered it, and on leaving, the maids would see us off.

"Ah, yes....."

The instant I acknowledged it, the maid's face changed.

"Where might you be going!? Are you going to another maid's place!?"

"Eh, eehh!?"

The maid drew near us with an incredibly menacing look. For a moment, I couldn't grasp what was happening.

"Lately, I've been wondering why my master and mistresses' actions seemed a little strange....."

She muttered to herself with a terrifying visage.

"What, what in the world is happening!?"

Koigasaki started, in an even more confused state than me.

"Since this is a **Yandere** cafe, she might have entered **Yandere** mode."

Sakurai-san analyzed calmly.

"If you want to go to that woman's place no matter what, then I'll you, then..... myself!"

"Eeeeeekkk!"

Along with those disturbing lines, the maid pulled out from her pocket, a really disturbing..... knife.

Seeing that, Koigasaki screamed.

However, with one look, I could tell that the knife was actually a toy.

"Sir, Madams, quickly get out of here!"

The maid in charge of the cashier suddenly joined in act, and stuck her body

out between us and the **Yandere**-turned maid to stop her.

"Don't bother about me, and quickly get out of here!"

"R-Right....."

We complied with her request, and since we had already paid up anyway, we ran out of the shop, descended the stairs and left the building.

"Pant, pant..... what was that about!? It was really scary!"

"There was talk about that shop going into **Yandere** mode, so I wonder if that was it....."

"Maybe that's what they do right after the customers have settled their bills? I wonder if that's why you can't see the cash from any of the tables....."

The **Yandere** begins when the maid starts talking kindly to the customers, huh.....

"I really don't get how that kind of thing can be popular among **Otakus**..... what's with you guys? Are **Otakus** masochists?"

"No, it's not like that....."

***Yanderes** should be restricted to 2D, I guess,* I quietly reaffirmed to myself once again.

"It's impossible for me to work at that kind of shop!"

"Indeed, you also need acting skills. It might be kind of tough....."

Sakurai-san agreed with Koigasaki's opinion.

Since it was getting kind of late, we decided to go home and headed towards Akihabara station. Koigasaki and Sakurai-san talked as we walked, and it seemed like they'd decided to go for the first maid cafe we had visited, the one with the 'room in the attic' theme.

In the end, I was secretly depressed I never really got to talk freely with Sakurai-san.

Maybe in the end, from here on, I will never be able to talk freely to another girl aside from Koigasaki....., I was assailed by such a wild, negative thought.

"Well then, I'll say goodbye here."

"All right, Azuki-chan, see you tomorrow!"

Sakurai-san faded away into the crowd as she headed towards her subway line.

Koigasaki and I shared the same line part of our way home, so we rode the escalator together.

"..... I must be really hated."

I tried asking Koigasaki as we were riding the escalator.

"Eh?"

"I mean, by Sakurai-san."

"Aah....."

Aah? What was that reaction supposed to mean? Did Koigasaki also recognize that?

Our train came, and we hurried up on board.

"Did I do something wrong!? I really can't think of anything..... Or is there something else? She really hates me because I'm a creepy **Otaku**....."

"Azuki-chan, you know, is no good with male **Otakus**."

"..... eh?"

The words that came out of Koigasaki's mouth were unexpected.

"The male **Otaku** members in her manga research club have been openly talking about erotic stuff in their erotic manga and games in the club room, you see. And they've even been showing those stuff to the female club members and bringing up such subjects to them. Aside from Azuki-chan, the other female members would answer enthusiastically, and join in the erotic discussions, it seems. So, as Azuki-chan couldn't do that, she gradually built up an aversion towards the male members, and also could feel a wall forming between her and the other girls..... and there's no place for her in her club activities, she said."

"Wow, unbelievable....."

I murmured involuntarily.

"Eh?"

"I mean, it's unbelievable, right! That's already considered sexual harassment, isn't it? To show a girl that kind of stuff and even talk about it....."

Personally, I would never ever want to show my erotic books to a girl..... Even **Otakus** come in all sorts and colors.

When she heard that, some surprise surfaced on Koigasaki's face and she looked at me quietly.

".....? What is it?"

"..... ah, nothing..... yeah, I agree....."

I queried Koigasaki wondering what was up, but she just averted her gaze. When I looked at her expression carefully, the corner of her lips somehow looked relaxed.

I wondered if I'd said something funny. I really couldn't get this girl.

"A-Anyway! It's because of that and not because she hates you or anything, all right? It just seems like she's averse to all male **Otakus**."

"It's all because of the guys in the manga research club, huh....."

At any rate, I was able to come to terms with Sakurai-san's attitude so far.

I wonder if she thinks I'm the same as the other guys in her club.....

For now, I'm just relieved that it's not because she hates me at a personal level.

"Which reminds me, are you seriously going to work at a maid cafe?"

I asked Koigasaki about the other thing that had been on my mind.

"Yeah, at the first place we went today. Rather, don't you also want to take on a part-time job?"

Me working part-time.....? Indeed, I had been playing with the thought for quite a while.

If I got a job, then I would have more money to indulge in my **Otaku** hobbies,

and I also would be able to buy better clothes.

Also, and more importantly, I had the cosplay coming up. I would definitely need money for that.

"Maybe I should..... get a part-time job as well, I guess. I would certainly like to work as a game tester."

"Huh? What's that?"

There was one occasion when I searched around, in the event that I ever got a part-time job, and at the time had felt that working as a game tester would be most suitable for me.

"It's a part-time job to play-test and check for bugs in a game before it goes on sale. I can do it at home, and I also love games, so it's definitely very suitable for me."

"What's with that? Do you really intend to take on such a part-time job?"

"..... eh?"

My brain froze the instant I heard Koigasaki's words.

"I'm gathering up all my courage to work at a maid cafe in order to become an **Otaku**, and yet here you are, aiming to be a game tester? A job like that will never get you closer to becoming a **Riajuu**, will it? How about considering a more **Riajuu**-like part-time job, like working at a family restaurant or at a fast-food outlet?"

Family restaurant? Fast-food outlet?

"I never considered it....."

"Why not? Those types of part-time jobs will no doubt help you in getting closer to becoming a **Riajuu**, right? You can also talk to girls in the meantime."

Indeed.

Koigasaki was prepared to work at a maid cafe in order to get closer to becoming an **Otaku**, but I wanted to become a game tester..... if I did that, then nothing would change for me.

"I see..... you're right! I'll also search for a more **Riajuu**-like part-time job!"

And also, with that, I would be able to become friendly with the girls at my workplace, and prove to myself that I could also talk freely to girls other than Koigasaki!

At that point in our conversation, the train reached Koigasaki's station and we parted ways.

I took out my cellphone as soon as she was off, jumped to a part-time job search site, and started looking for a 『**Riajuu**-like』job.

However, it seemed that places like family restaurants and fast-food outlets could get really tough during busy times.

At that moment, my eyes caught sight of a recruitment notice from one of the job listings.

This is the one. It has to be this one! The place was also close to a subway station between my home and school, and they allowed high school students to apply.

And thus, I pressed the 'apply' button for that part-time job.

Translator's Notes and References & OTARIA Glossary

1. [↑](#) Yandere: See [here](#).

Chapter 5

On Monday, the start of the new week, the results of my make-up test came back.

Thanks to Hasegawa's tutoring, I managed to pass with flying colors, much to my surprise.

I have to let Hasegawa know. And I also have to say my thanks to her.

"You should take this chance to ask Hasegawa-san out on a date."

During the following break, at the staircase landing, I reported my results to Koigasaki first. No, to be precise, it wasn't that. I wanted to consult her on how I should express my thanks to Hasegawa.

And so, that was her answer.

"How did you come up with that!?"

Her way thinking was always off the charts, it seemed.

"Isn't this a good opportunity!? You can say something like 『Hasegawa-san, it's all thanks to you that I managed to pass my make-up test! I'd like to express my gratitude and give you a treat! Or is there any place you'd like to go!?』!"

"A thank-you treat..... I see."

"That's right, since you'll be doing a part-time job, you should have some extra cash right? Which reminds me, did you manage to get one?"

"Yeeeah..... the other day, I applied for one and got accepted!"

That's right. I applied for a part-time job back when I looked for one on my cellphone, and on the same day, the call came. On Saturday the following day, I took the interview. And yesterday, I was informed over the phone that I was accepted.

"Isn't that fast! What kind of job is it?"

"Karaoke."

It seems less busy than family restaurants or fast-food joints, and I can idle when there aren't any customers, and also, it seems like I'd be able to meet some girls there..... and thus, with that impure motive, I'll be working part-time at a karaoke chain's outlet near a subway station.

"Oh ~. That's great, isn't it? You'll be making some money and it makes it even easier to ask her out."

"How about you, about the maid cafe."

"I failed in the first round."

"First round!?"

What first round? It's not like it's an idol audition.

Normally, shouldn't it be concluded with submitting a CV and going for an interview?

"Firstly, you have to submit a photo and profile, and only those who get accepted will get an interview. And when I submitted my photo, a mail saying 『Our company requires you to dye your hair black in order to work here. Is that acceptable?』 came back. I don't want my hair to be black. It's no way for me. So, I replied that it was impossible, and they answered that then it would be impossible to work at their place."

..... you wouldn't call that failing, would you?

"That shouldn't be a big problem, right? Dying your hair black....."

"What, no way! Black hair will never suit me! If I make my hair black, I'll look super ugly!"

..... I don't really think hair color will change the shape of your face, though.

"Azuki-chan managed to clear the first round, but when I told her I couldn't make it, she also rejected the offer, since she wanted to work together with me. And so, right now, we're applying to another maid cafe."

"I see....."

"Well, let's not talk about me! Right, date! When you thank Hasegawa, ask her out on a date! And also, ask her for her mail address!"

"Don't say such unreasonable things! It's too hard for me! Jeez, it's a mistake to consult you! Anyway, I'll just let her know my results and say my thanks to her!"

"What, you're so useless!"

Koigasaki, this girl's always laying out an impossible challenge each time.

Just as I was about to return to my classroom, Hasegawa seemed to be coming back from somewhere, and was walking along the corridor towards the classroom. If she went back into the classroom, it would be more and more difficult to talk to her with all my classmates around, so I had to call out to her while she was still in the corridor. I braced myself and approached Hasegawa.

As I casually turned my head around, I saw Koigasaki looking at me with a firm expression, and she nodded twice to me.

No, even if you make that 『All right, go for it』 face, I'll definitely not ask her out, got it!?

Even when I came up to Hasegawa, I became flustered not knowing what to say, and as Hasegawa looked intently at me questioningly, I made up my mind and met her gaze.

"Ha..... Hasegawa!"

I managed to speak up with my willpower, but my nervousness emerged from the back of my voice.

Hasegawa looked at me intently with her usual expressionless face.

"Ah, s-sorry for calling out so suddenly....."

It had been probably three days since I talked to her. Even though I'd gotten used to it, I still ended up getting nervous.

"Ah, I got back, the results, of my make-up test today. I managed to pass without a hitch. Really, thanks a lot, it's all to your credit, Hasegawa."

I rattled off everything in one go.

"I see, congratulations. I didn't do anything....."

"No, it's all thanks to you! I'd definitely have failed again without your help!"

"No, it's nothing really....."

No way I'll let this conversation end!

"E-Erm, by the way, did you manage to watch that DVD you borrowed!?"

Remembering the incident when I brought Hasegawa to TSUTAYA to rent a DVD, I tried to suddenly bring up the topic.

"Yes. I returned it yesterday. There was a return box and I just deposited them inside, however, will that be okay?"

"Ah, yeah, it'll be fine if it's not overdue."

"I see, that's great....."

..... aah, the conversation ended again.....

"Well then."

"Ah, yeeaah. Sorry for suddenly calling out to you."

I could only keep quiet and watch as Hasegawa entered the classroom. Since just saying my thanks alone was enough to blow my fuse, it might be too early for me to ask her out on a date.

"Hasegawa-san!"

At that moment, once again, Koigasaki called out from behind. Hasegawa halted at the voice and turned around.

"Erm, if you don't mind, why don't we go someplace together to let us express our thanks for your help with our studies!?"

"Eh? Express your thanks?"

"Yeah, yeah, it was thanks to you that Kashiwada managed to escape from remedial classes, and he really wants to thank you no matter what, he said! I'm also very grateful to you, so I really want to properly thank you ~."

"There's no need to specially thank me or anything..... I didn't really do anything."

Without letting Hasegawa notice it, Koigasaki lightly kicked my leg like before.

"Ah, e-erhh, well, we really have to properly thank you! You tutored me

twice, and you also made copies of your notes for us..... I-If you don't mind, if there's anything you want to eat, or any place you want to go, we'll give you a treat!"

I said it.

I thought I must have used all my life's courage for that.

"It's not really that big a deal..... I didn't really do anything deserving of a treat....."

"No, I won't be able to feel easy if I don't!"

I hung on to it since I couldn't bear giving up at this point, but was it too pushy?

Will she feel creeped out if I'm being too pushy? I really don't know the bounds.

"Is that so? If you're saying it to that extent..... then I shall take you on your offer."

Hasegawa smiled a little.

Maybe she was getting vexed about it, but the fact that she smiled should mean that she wasn't feeling bothered by it, I suppose?

"I'm feeling kind of bad to trouble you....."

"There's no trouble at all!"

I asked Hasegawa out because I wanted to hang out with her, but somehow, it made her feel apologetic about it instead.

"Then, Hasegawa-san, when you think of where you want to go, just text Kashiwada!"

Text!?

"All right."

To think that I'll be able to exchange messages with Hasegawa! Then, I realized something dreadful. My cellphone was inside my bag in the classroom. I could go and get it, but by the time I did that, the break would be over.

I took out my student handbook from my pocket right away, scribbled my mail address on a page, tore it off and handed it to Hasegawa.

"This is my mail address, so once you've decided where you'd like to go, please text me! Let's decide on the program and place via text!"

"All right."

Hasegawa accepted the note with my ugly handwriting.

Aah, what a lousy way to give her my mail address.

"The bell's going to ring soon."

"Ah yeah, sorry, for stopping you suddenly!"

We then entered the classroom and went to our seats.

To think that I can really get to hang out with Hasegawa! While I felt chagrined, this was all thanks to Koigasaki-sama. If it were up to me alone, the conversation would have ended after I said my thanks. Taking advantage of the fact that I was seated in the second row from behind, I took out my cellphone and started writing a text.

『To: Koigasaki Momo

I'm seriously grateful to you!』

..... after sending the text, I thought calmly. I merely gave my mail address to Hasegawa, didn't I? There's a possibility that I won't get any text from her, isn't there?

If she doesn't really want to hang out with me, then that will be highly likely.

Like I thought, even if I had to overdo it, I should have said something like 「Let's exchange our mail addresses!」. In that case, I would have then been able to get her mail address.

The cellphone under my desk vibrated. I hurriedly took it out, and taking care not to get found out by the teacher, I flipped it open.

Don't tell me it's from Hasegawa..... no, it's hard to think that Hasegawa would send out texts in the middle of class. As I let my mind run wild on such a favorable development for an instant, it was immediately crushed.

『Sender: Koigasaki Momo』

That girl..... she's pretty bold despite being much further in front.

『How useless can you be SeRioUsLy... After helping you so much, you BeTtEr make sure you do your part well for the cosplay event GeT IT!? Which reminds me, I've been thinking about it all this while, your texts rEEK of an oLd MaN... Before you even exchange texts with Hasegawa, you should brush up on your teXtS.』

My texts reek of an old man.....?

I wonder what she meant by that. While it was true that my texts lacked Deco-Mail and emoticons.....

Maybe it's better for me to start writing more modern text messages, I suppose.

To be more specific, maybe it's better for me to fill my texts with Deco-Mail or [pictographs](#) or lower case characters, I suppose.

No wait, using lower case characters might be a little unreasonable for guys.

『Is it okay if I just use more Deco-Mail? Maybe like this (Deco-Mail) I don't really get it (Deco-Mail) .』

The Deco-Mail attached to Koigasaki's text got saved into my cellphone's data box automatically, and those Deco-Mail inlaid within the contents of the text.

To be more specific, you get a smiling cat Deco-Mail at the end of a question mark, and a crying teddy at the end of "I don't really get it".

Once again, her reply came back immediately.

『A guy... and furthermore a plain-looking guy like you using Deco-Mail looks painful... On top of that, it's a dead giveaway that 'Using Deco-Mail' = 'Texting a girl'. It's better to just stick to the normal pictographs that come with your cellphone by default.』

I s-see.....

Since Deco-Mail was not loaded into a cellphone by default as opposed to pictographs, in order to obtain Deco-Mail, one had to either save the Deco-Mail

from the texts that came from another sender or download from a Deco-Mail distribution site (though I had no idea whether such a site existed or not), and basically, since most guys didn't use Deco-Mail, they probably wouldn't purposely download from a site, I suppose; in other words, a guy could only get his hands on Deco-Mail when he received texts from a girl, I guess.

Which meant that, it would be obvious that the guy had been exchanging texts with girls.

Of course, in my case, Koigasaki is the only one who would send me Deco-Mail.

After that, as I was afraid of catching the teacher's attention, I stopped texting, closed my cellphone and put it into my bag.

I would do well to remember that I should only use pictographs and not Deco-Mail whenever I text Hasegawa.

Though before that, I had to receive Hasegawa's texts first.....

The next class was an elective class.

I had chosen art class while Kiritani, who was always with me when we changed classrooms, had chosen music, and as such, we had to part ways and I went to the art room alone with my sketch book and stationary.

"Today, you'll draw portraits."

Was the first thing announced by the teacher once we started our art class.

"Please form groups of two."

The words uttered by the teacher were cruel. There was no one I could talk to in this elective class. It's miserable to say this, but, even though three months had passed since I started school, I had yet to make any friends in this class. In other words, I was naturally left out.

"Boy and girl, seats far apart, different classes, doesn't matter ~."

After hearing the teacher's declaration, my eyes turned to the seat in front of the teacher's desk.

Hasegawa was there.

Hasegawa didn't seem to have any friends in class, so I'd been wondering how it would be in this elective class.

In this elective class, there are students from other classes mixed into it, so perhaps she has friends here?

But as I looked at Hasegawa, I just saw her in a daze.

Nobody called out to her, nor did she call out to anyone.

Isn't this the best time to call out to her? Hasegawa was troubled, I too was troubled. However, the pathetic me just couldn't summon his courage to take this one step.....

"Has everyone paired up already~? There's no one left over, right ~?"

When I looked around me, everyone had already gotten into pairs.

People had already freely formed their pairs and moved their seats as much as they liked, and as such, there were no more people around Hasegawa. With my heart aching when I looked at her, I couldn't help but move towards Hasegawa with my stationary.

"Hasegawa, c-could it be that you haven't paired up with anyone.....?"

Hasegawa turned around at my voice. I'd always thought she had an expressionless face, but I could see surprise on it when she looked at me.

"Kashiwada-kun.....?"

"Well, I'm also left over, and searching for someone to pair up with..... if you don't mind, how about pairing up with me!?"

"Is that, so? really?"

Hasegawa looked at me in wonder.

Even though she didn't say a word of acquiescence, I could take that as a yes, I guessed.....

"Everyone has paired up, right?"

Hearing the teacher's voice, Hasegawa and I turned to the front.

"Then, decide on who's going to be the model first, and start drawing. It will be easier if you start with a general outline first."

"Ah, Hasegawa, you can start first!"

"..... then, I'll take up your offer, and draw first."

If Hasegawa was the one drawing first, then it meant that I would be the model first huh..... Whichever it was, I would have to spend a long period of time staring at Hasegawa. Is my heart still there? Scratch that, I'm feeling apologetic to be her model with such a plain-looking face.

The other students were drawing happily as they were talking, but Hasegawa and I exchanged no words from start to finish. It's not like I knew what to talk about, and besides, Hasegawa looked so serious as she was drawing that I found it hard to put in a word.

"Are you almost done?"

The teacher said after fifteen minutes had passed.

"I'm done....."

It was rare for Hasegawa to open her mouth first.

In the first place, she might just have been talking to herself and not me.

It was the perfect Hasegawa who was good in both studies and athletics. She must also be good in art, I supposed. I really wanted to take a look at it, but did not have the courage to ask.

"If you've finished, please by all means show it to your partner."

After the teacher made that statement, Hasegawa stiffened.

I gathered my courage and asked.

"Hasegawa, if you're done, can you show it to me?"

"..... do I, really have to show it to you.....?"

"..... eh?"

Hasegawa's expression was unusually taut. What in the world happened? While I was happy to see a new expression on her face other than the faint

smile or the complete lack of expression I was familiar with, I was curious as to what could have caused her to look like that.

"Erh, I'm not saying that I don't want to show it to you, but..... I'm just afraid that I'll make you upset....."

"Eh? What do you mean? There's no way I'll get upset."

I laughed in spite of myself. Even Hasegawa had a girly side - being too embarrassed to show what she had drawn - to her. Which was cute, I thought.

Hasegawa sighed out as if she was giving up on something, detached the sketchbook from her easel, and handed it to me, while keeping the back side towards me.

"Sorry....."

For some reason, she apologized.

"Ehh....."

I was speechless after looking at the drawing that Hasegawa had handed me.
..... it was beyond my imagination.

Frankly, it was no longer in the realm of being bad.

The thought of Hasegawa seeing me in this manner as depicted in her drawing made me depressed.

Or maybe there was something wrong with the mirror I normally looked at, and this was actually how my face looked.

Whichever it was, I was depressed.

"S-Sorry..... I knew it, I shouldn't have shown it to you."

Hasegawa took back her sketchbook from my hands.

Crap, did I just make a really terrible face?

"No, there's no need to apologize! I think it's really an uniquely great drawing! You also managed to capture the special traits of my face....."

"Kashiwada-kun, please don't overdo it. I'm fully aware that my drawing is bad enough to make people upset. And on top of that, we have to do portraits

this time..... I knew it, I shouldn't have paired up with anyone and just drawn my own face instead."

Hasegawa was unusually depressed, and looked hard at her own drawing with a dark expression.

"T-That's not true! I like this drawing!"

I maintained impetuously. Crap, she might think that I'm strange.

"..... Kashiwada-kun, I've been wondering about this, but could it be that....."

"All right, next, the one who was the model earlier, please start drawing!"

The words from the teacher ended up cutting off Hasegawa.

Could it be that..... what!? What on earth was Hasegawa trying to say?

[File:Otaria v02](#)

[121.jpg](#)

"Amazing.....

what should I do in
order to be this
good....."

Even though I really wanted to know, I was unable to ask now, and started drawing her portrait.

Needless to say, Hasegawa was looking straight at me with a serious expression. The more I looked at her, the more of a well-featured beautiful face I found her to have, and that face was right in front of my eyes. With my hand trembling in nervousness, I tried my best to draw her portrait.

There was a period when I used to imitate manga art, so I was confident that my drawing didn't suck, but even so, it was definitely not anything superb, and thus, I completed a not so interesting portrait.

"Amazing..... what should I do in order to be this good....."

"Eeh!? No, this is not good at all!?"

However, Hasegawa certainly did not appear to be flattering me, and was

gazing at my drawing earnestly, impressed.

Even for someone like Hasegawa who was gifted in both beauty and brains, and excelled in both studies and sports, actually had the imperfection of being bad at art huh.....

Knowing her imperfection, it seemed like she was also just a human, and a feeling of affinity welled up in me. While I felt apologetic towards the girl who had a serious, troubled look on her face, I was happy to be able to know an imperfection of hers.

Translator's Notes and References & OTARIA Glossary

Chapter 6

[We have a job in another café. Do you know “My Home”?]

I received such e-mail from Koigasaki early on Saturday morning. I hoped it was from Hasegawa, yet she didn't write anything since that exchange, and I was upset by this. I read the email from Koigasaki again. They passed into My Home, that maid café? How could I don't know it, if I actually was there once? When I was in Akihabara with Suzuki, he dragged me into the most popular maid café. And they passed there?.. Well, both Koigasaki and Sakurai are pretty girls, so they should pass any criteria of acceptance based on appearance.

[He~. I was there. Did you start working there?] – I replied,

[We have to undergo an induction course today. They don't let us work without it.] – prompt reply arrived.

However, if I remember correctly, amongst the duties of the maids of that café, maids should be able to talk with male customers, and even dance and sing on stage. Here is the question – can Koigasaki do any of this? Also, did she get that job knowing it? I was about to worry about her, but I am no better.

Yesterday, I started to work at a karaoke. I have to go there today as well to work from 1 PM and until 10 PM, but, frankly speaking, I don't like there, despite I've never been there. There is a senpai of 3rd year high school, the type of my aversion – Riajuu. He did explain me once, and if I would ask to repeat he make an awful face. He thinks of me as a nuisance, indeed.

When I was there, there were three people; overall, there are two men and two women besides me, they are all either high school or university students. Of course, all them are great Riajuu, and I stand out among them. No wonder they don't want to befriend with me.

I made my preparations to the job sadly, hoping there will be other members today. My hopes were never got to come true. There is the same creepy-flashy senpai who guided me recently. By the way, his name is Kato.

“If you're free, read this.” – he said and gave me a manual-like something.

Whoa, what a slapdash. That day he guided me how to carry drinks and clean tables after customers left. Today I can feel the same negligent and no-questions-allowed aura, hence there are few things I didn't understand. I thought to ask another senpai, however it was Saturday, and considering a number of customers even a newbie like me would have to carry drinks and food all the time. I made mistakes and warned by Kato and other senpais. When my shift ended, both body and mind tired, and I returned home.

Arriving home, I found my little sister Akari playing a game, and my mother slept. I noticed that Akari wears only her t-shirt, with no pants down there.

For now, she is wearing mother's or somebody's t-shirt as a home dress, yet she was stylish in last year. Years ago, she used to wear panties only while she's home, but since mother said "what a shameless girl!", my sister wears something stylish in summer. Yet I was scolded when I was wondering in my bare panties, "what a dirty thing you're showing to us!".

"By the way, where is my meal?" – I was surprised there was nothing edible on the table. The other should know that workplace provides no meal.

"Heat the curry for yourself. Also, there should be rice in the rice cooker." – said Akari to me without turning her face.

"Really? Oh, I've so tired." – I'm hungry and I'd like to eat some curry, but I'm too tired to serve it. I jump on my sofa with the feeling I'll fall asleep in few minutes.

"Naoki, are so tired you can't heat up own meal?! What level of laziness did you achieve? You should not have played this much in the first place!"

"Didn't mother tell you? I have been working in the karaoke."

"Working?! You?!" – Akari turned her face to me and I can see her surprised face.

"Why would exert yourself? Work is just something beyond your power! You should be the creepy dump otaku Naoki!"

Is she making fun of me? Whatever, I have no willpower left to fight back.

"Just why do you going to sleep? It's obviously your fault to exert yourself

going to work!”

Oh, shut up already...

I was already half-asleep when I got to the sofa, so I could not listen what Akari said.

“Naoki you idiot!”

“Ouch!” – Akari sat on me, bumping with her butts.

“What are you doing?!” – I woke up and was about to get angry on Akari. But... Curry with rice and some drink is on the table.

“What is this? Did you make it?”

“Naoki, you should not sleep with empty stomach. Also, don’t you feel sorry for the mother who made this meal?”

“It this for real? Thank you, Akari.”

Akari did not look on me, so I just started to ride of the curry. Then, Akari finished her game and went to bed with some kind of resentment. I thought at first that she is being nice to me... I don’t understand this puberty age sister.

*

The next day, Sunday, I went out into the Electric Town, Akihabara, to find a use of money I got from the work. I’m wandering around by Tora no Ana and Animate. The money itself is yet to receive, and I have many plans for them, so I decided not to buy anything until I had a strong desire of it. Means, I have a bit more than 5,000 yen in my wallet. I’m looking at the shop windows without buying anything. Honestly, it’s not that fun to look without buying.

Then I noticed that it’s too hot and I’m very thirsty. I guess I visit some café. At first, I was about to enter McD, but seeing that long line I give up. Next, I remembered that there is Mos Burger on the other side, so I head to Mos by a crosswalk. However, there is a huge of a crowd here as well. How long it will take to buy something, then, it is unknown whether there will be a free seat when I finally buy it.

I could buy a drink in a vending machine, but I wanted to give my legs a rest. Therefore, I remembered the café where Koigasaki got a job. She didn’t tell me

when she will start to work, but she should have practical training till she would fit the position, so I guess she is not on shift today yet. That café is comparatively close to where I am now, and I feel if I'd go to a usual café of restaurant I found a crowd. It could be true to a maid café likewise, but it might be not that much of customer, so I head on to the My Home.

I go to the higher floor by an escalator, and it is crowded, yet a maid quickly leads me to a table. It's out of the question that is the first time I'm in this café alone, I'm a bit nervous.

"Master, what would you like to order today?" – said a cute maid with brown hair and flashy make-up, and I ordered the cheapest orange juice. All of the maids here wear short skirts with laces, all of them are cute and young. It seems they hire maids by their appearance.

Until my menu is ready, I'm looking around. Some maids are speaking with customers, some play games on a black beard hair's breadth, some take photos with customers.

Now I have the menu, I can see that games and photos are noted there. Well, that was expected.

"Please serve." – said a staff-like man in a suit to maids. It seems a meal is ready and a maid has to carry it. In fact, a maid comes to the counter and picks up an order. It's surely crowded today: maids run around with no break. At least, my order got ready.

I was surprised when I see the maid. It was Sakurai.

"Kashiwada-kun? Why are you here?.."

Sakurai leaves a novice impression to me. Her outfit seems to be fixed to fit her huge breast. It attracts my gaze, but I overcame it. Also, it doesn't really matter, but it's the first time she called me by my surname.

"So today is your shift, Sakurai. It just happened I have business in Akiba, so I came here at the same time.

"So you came to see how is Momo-chan's doings..." – said Sakurai keeping her guard on.

“N-no! Also, I thought they won’t let you work until training end, so I didn’t expect to see you.”

“Both I and Momo-chan passed all test yesterday, so we work from today.”

“From the first time? That’s great.”

“No, that was pretty simple, so whole training took about an hour. Momo-chan is there.”

“Eh? Koigasaki is working now?”

Sakurai pointed to the kitchen, and I saw the familiar face there. Maid outfit fits Koigasaki the best among other maids. It seems she’s being instructed by a senior maid.

“Azuki-sa-an! Please serve!” – a staff called Sakurai’s name. Hey, are you working here by the real name?

“I’m going! Okay, I have to go.” – roughly said Sakurai and left. Drinking my orange juice, I’m watching Koigasaki. Then, senior maid tells her something, I guess it’s about work. Then, she takes a tray and carries to a customer; he asked her something, and as usual, Koigasaki is nervous so much I can tell it from this much apart. She nodded to the customer and left him. After that, a maid called her, and they disappeared in the staff room. She turned for a moment and that was enough for our eyes had met.

Koigasaki left the room alone, and she was depressed. I thought she would carry another tray, but she started to help at the kitchen. When the 30-minutes limit approached, I headed to the register, to avoid paying for protraction. Casting a glance to the kitchen again, our eyes met for the second time. We don’t say anything to each other. I paid my bill and left the café.

I would not buy anything in Akiba anymore, so I headed home, and I was at the Akiba station already when I got an email.

[From: Koigasaki Momo Text: Where are you now? If you still in Akiba, could you please wait for me?] – it seems she’s on her break now, since she is able to write messages.

[I’m at the Akiba station now], – I replied, and right after that another email

has come.

[I've just exit my shift. Can you come to the used outerwear shop, Cosplay Shop Mitsubado in three and half hours?]

Is it three hours? That's a good amount of time to wander around in Akiba. In addition, I have to buy a cosplay outfit, so this is a good thing for me. I didn't plan where to buy it anyway. Also, it's a shop of used things, so prices there must be lower. I can find what I need today and buy it when I got my salary.

Of course, I never visited that Cosplay Shop Mitsubado, so I don't know where it is.

[Where is it? Can't we just meet in front of the My Home?]

[Absolutely not! If I would walk with a man in Akiba, they forbid me to work!]

That's tough! Wait, would not they forbid it if you go to that cosplay shop with me? Well, fine. Using my phone I found that Mitsubado shop is comparatively close to My Home.

I have been waiting in a place from where I could reach Mitsubado within five minutes, when Koigasaki came... however, she has Sakurai-san behind her, so I sighed out.

"Here we are! Let's go to see cosplay clothes!"

"Ah, sure."

I guess it's a bit late, but I feel something out of place. Why did Koigasaki invite me to go to a cosplay shop? She could do kya-kya looking for clothes with Sakurai only.

"Azuki-chan said this shop allows to try clothes on! Isn't that great?"

"Ah, sure." – I nodded and we came into the shop.

"Momo-chan, cosplay would suit you well! This game is very interesting too, so I lend it to you later."

Sakurai-san advised to Koigasaki a cosplay of the main heroin of a love simulator. Surely, its setting is Western fantasy, and the heroine's clothes is a tenuous one-piece, it would suit Koigasaki for sure.

“Wow, such nice!”

“Hey, here is the clothes of Prince of Dance!” – said Sakurai loudly and run towards the clothes. Oh, that’s from that popular among women anime...

“Kashiwada, is here something from an anime Suzuki-kun like?”- asked Koigasaki with a serious face. Oh, I understood now, that’s why she called me. That’s because she wants to wear a cosplay of a character that Suzuki would like. That’s good use of our agreement for you. I’m using her to help me with Hasegawa a lot as well, though. We’re even, then.

“From the fresh ones, let’s see... Here, Bishojo Squadron Cuties – 5.” – I instantly found the cosplay of Suzuki favorite anime and took it. It is an anime broadcasted by Sunday mornings; the story is about five-grade school girls who transform and fight an enemy. Suzuki is into lolis, so this anime is definitely of his favorites.

“Mm-hmm.” – Koigasaki looks on it, knitting her brows. Probably, she’s confused by this outfit: the skirt is considerably short, the belly is fully opened.

“By the way, Suzuki’s favorite character...” – I found an image on my phone and showed to Koigasaki. There are five girl colors: red, pink, white, blue, black. The one Suzuki likes is that wears pink clothes, the youngest among other warriors, little sister-ish character, natural fourth-grader, the Cutie Pink Momozono Ririna. By the way, each character’s name affects the color after transformation.

“He~. I...I’ll try on this one.” – said Koigasaki to a shop staff. She could wear such open clothes, if this is for Suzuki...

“Eh? Momo-chan, you really want to try that one?” – surprised Sakurai.

“Y-yes.”

“Well, it will suit you, but...” – said Sakurai with dissent on her face. Koigasaki entered the changing room. Sakurai felt discomfort being left with me.

“Kashiwada-kun, did you recommend that clothes to Momo-chan?” – asked Sakurai with accusing tone in her voice.

“Well, I did, but on the other hand, I did not...”

Hey, isn't it looks like I made Koigasaki to wear that flasher's suit? At that moment, Koigasaki opened curtains.

"How it is? Not too rigid?"

Momozono's clothes look surprisingly great on Koigasaki. Probably it's because her casual dress is tenuous as well. Koigasaki made the same hairstyle as Cutie Pink, and transformed from Gyarū to something that would make an otaku would jump with joy.

"Momo-chan, you're beautiful!" – said Sakurai-san and stuck to her.

"If Momo-chan will cosplay Cuties –5, I'll do this with her! But it may be too harsh to me, though."

"Why do you think so? Let's do it together!"

If Sakurai would cosplay a character from Cuties – 5, it must be Black Cutie Kurose Reika for sure. She is six-grader with a good style for a grade school, and the only sexy character among the Cuties.

"However, that outfit maybe too expensive..." – said Koigasaki seeing the price label on the skirt. It's used, but still it has the value of 10,000 yen. I guess, it was a tedious work, and I can imagine how much did new one cost.

"Kashiwada, is here anything else?"

"Ehm..."

I'm looking through the shop for an outfit of a character that Suzuki likes. Sakurai-san watches me with a heavy look. She might not understand why I'm looking for a cosplay costume for Koigasaki. Yet, it's a mystery for me whether Koigasaki told Sakurai-san regarding Suzuki, so I can't say anything here.

"Wow, even this is sold as a cosplay outfit!"

The next thing I've noticed was outfits from "Don't you prefer kindergarteners?". The plot is about kindergarten girls that suddenly grew up to 16-year-old girls, hence they can easily undress in front of the main hero, or to bath with him, very lewd love(?)comedy. Suzuki likes lolis, but this anime attracts with unbalanced loli mind and grown-up body of the heroines.

By the way, originally, the scene was a kindergarten, therefore 16-year-old

heroines wear a kindergarten outfit, and I didn't think that there could be a cosplay of those.

"W-what is that?.." – Koigasaki is stunned seeing the kindergarten's outfit. Well, of course, from what side you'd try to look on it, it is the kindergarten's outfit, despite an adult size.

"Well, he does like this too, but you don't push yourself..."

"I guess it might look good on you after try it on... Um." – mumbled Koigasaki to herself with a pale face, and disappeared into the dressing room along the cosplay. What a brave girl.

"How was it, Momo-chan? Did you manage to wear that?"

"Yes, I did, however... This is too harsh... No, impossible!"

"Eh? I'll open if you're ready..." – said Sakurai-san and opened the curtains before Koigasaki could reply.

"....." – ashamed Koigasaki looks down on the floor, standing in front of us wearing that kindergarten's outfit. Well, I suppose it's good too. She's pretty in this. It seems Koigasaki looks pretty in any suit.

"This is impossible! I should not have worn this!"

"Don't say that, it suits you so good I'd want to lick you over!" – said Sakurai-san when the curtain was quickly closed. Hey, that comment was obviously out. Is she okay, that girl?

"However, I don't have enough of courage to go to the event wearing this. Kashiwada, is there anything else?"

"Else? Well, uhr..." – I grabbed one more outfit.

"What about this one?" – I said and awkwardly gave that outfit to Koigasaki. Why "awkwardly", you ask? Of course, this outfit is more shameless than the kindergarten's one. This outfit is from "Variant Princess", a battle game. However all of the characters are women, and what is the most important, all of them wear highly revealing suits. The loli character that Suzuki likes wears a nurse suit, an erotic pure-white suit which upper part is cut off in an unexpected place, making the lower half of the breast visible. The lower part of the suit

comprised of extremely short mini-skirt and white knee-socks. Fans' love has no bounds.

Koigasaki took the outfit from me and her face became deadly white.

"T-t-t-t-t-t-this... This..! There is no way I could wear this! W-w-w-w-what do you think you are?!" – said Koigasaki with a red face and gave me that outfit.

"That was you who asked me, wasn't you?"

I noticed that Koigasaki looks at me with disdain in her eyes. No! It was not me who wanted to make Koigasaki wear this! Why did it happen?

"Is there anything else?"

"We saw most of the outfits here!"

Koigasaki became upset hearing this. Waiting Koigasaki to change the kindergarten's outfit to her casual dress, I felt Sakurai's gaze.

"K-Kashiwada-kun, you're helping Momo-chan to find an outfit that would suit her... Did she ask you to?"

"She didn't, but you see... she wants to become an otaku, but she barely knows any characters, so I have to teach her." I'm tired already and honestly think that I should tell about Suzuki, but if that passionate towards cosplay Sakurai-san hears that Koigasaki's interest in the cosplay is but the impure will to befriend with a boy, I doubt her impression would remain that good. Thus, I decided to not reveal about Suzuki.

"I see..." – said Sakurai-san with dissatisfied face and stares at the dressing room. After a while, Koigasaki left the room.

"Here I am! I'm sorry for making you wait, Azuki-chan. If there is a suit you'd like to try..."

"No, today I'm full only seeing your cosplay, Momo-chan." Where did that dissatisfied face you made when you had talked to me gone?

"We have tried on this and that, and nothing selected in the end..." – sadly murmured Koigasaki.

"By the way, I have one more advice for you. There is a new vocaloid

character Hibine Ruru, the most popular character for now. (Among Suzuki). Yet this is a very new character, so there might be no cosplay outfits of her.”

Hibine Ruru is a 12-years old vocaloid, her young voice is her distinction. Illustrations are cute as well, many call them “just for lolicons”.

“Momo-chan, if you’re going to cosplay Hibine Ruru, I have her older sister Rika’s suit, so we will be matching.”

“Really? Well, what kind of a character is that Hibine Ruru?”

I explained all I know about Hibine Ruru and currently searching for images on the web.

“She is the cutest among them!”

Surely, mini-skirt of Hibine Ruru is not that revealing, and girls might see her suit attractive.

“But if it’s not on sale yet, there would be no meaning of this.” – sadly said Koigasaki.

“If there is no such suit yet, we can just make it by ourselves! I think this one is comparatively easy to make! Also, suit’s size will be exactly what we need! Momo-chan, why don’t we make it? I’ll help you, of course!”

“Hah? By ourselves? Sounds fun! I always wanted to make an outfit from the scratch!”

By yourselves? Are you sure you are able to do such a laborious thing?

“But, isn’t it too complicated?” – Koigasaki though the same.

“Not at all, if you have used to it. I’ll help you.”

“Really? Azuki-chan, did you make an outfit?”

“Yes, almost all of mine are hand-made. Shop’s outfits often don’t fit me at all. Also, it’s getting interesting if you continue to make it.”

Don’t fit you? Do you mean your breast? Is that because your breast is not a match for other slim parts?

“Which means, was that military outfit your hand-made?” – I couldn’t contain myself.

“Eh? Ah... Yeah... But I’d like you to forget that...” – steadily said Sakurai-san and awkwardly averted her eyes. Also, her voice was as half loud as when she talks to Koigasaki. I was hurt by such attitude, but it may be that she remembered I saw her panties. I remembered that fact too and shyly averted my eyes.

“That’s awesome! Then, I’ll make mine too!”

“Really? Next time, come to my home, we’ll do those together!”

Oh, the girls having a good time. In the end, Koigasaki decided to make Hibine Ruru’s outfit, and Sakurai-san will cosplay Megurine Rika. I decided to cosplay the main hero of Phi Kickers, but there was not sold any, so I’ll search another place.

“Okay, let’s buy wigs and cloth right now!” – suggested Sakurai-san once we left the cosplay shop. She’s apparently in very good mood.

“Where is it sold?”

“We can buy wigs here in Akiba, but I’m buying these in a shop in Nippori, I like their wigs. Let’s go to Nippori together?”

“Sure! Is it close to Akiba?”

Eh, so they go to Nippori after this... I thought, when Koigasaki suddenly turned back to me.

“Kashiwada-kun, go to the station by another path. They would get angry to me if they see us together.”

“Eh?”

Oh, I see. The maids of that café are prohibited to walk with men in Akihabara. Anyway, why would you follow that so strictly?

“Also, what are you going to do after this?” – asked Koigasaki. I’ve begun to think about it and got sad. I see, I’ve told her about the characters Suzuki would like, so I’m free now. She uses me as she wants.

“I guess I’m going home.”

I’m a bother anyways, and Sakurai-san obviously doesn’t want me to come.

“Did you buy a wig? Maybe it would be better to get one today?”

“I guess so...”

It's sad to go shopping for just a wig, and it's more useful to have somebody to show me a shop. I feel out of place going there by three of us, but there is no choice.

“I'm going too.”

“We're going to Nippori station first!” – Koigasaki and Sakurai-san left me. When I could see them, I head to that station too. Nippori station located in the fourth station from Akiba on the Yamanote line. We've agreed to meet at the South exit, so I go there. Sakurai-san and Koigasaki have waited for me.

“Okay! Where we go to, Azuki-chan?”

“Well... Let's start from the closest, the Maple shop.”

Thus we decided to go that Maple thing. Walking for a while, we found the signboard and entered there.

“Wah, that great!” – slipped out from Koigasaki who was looked over the shop. Wigs are set out along the wall. There are wigs with short hair and long hair, hairs are strong and colors are rich. Moreover, it's a really big variety of wigs.

“I would like to wear this with my casual suit.” – said Koigasaki taking a brown bob wig.

“I want to try a bob ever once, but I like my long hairs... I guess, a wig will be fine for me.”

“Momo-chan, a bob cut will suit you!”

“Really? Oh, by the way, it will suit you as well! Won't you try this on?”

They plunged into the world for the two again.

“Hey, wasn't we supposed to find a wig that would suit the characters?”

I tried to say something.

“Oh, you're right!”

“If you show an image of the character or tell the name to shop staff, they will find something that would fit!”

“Are you looking for something?”

An assistant called us in the right timing, and Koigasaki showed him an image with Hibine Ruru on. With this, the assistant promptly took out a wig from another side of the shop.

“We have different colors like this and this; also, this color is a little brighter than on the image, but it would fit well in my opinion.”

Koigasaki’s character has a watery hair color, such color is hard to describe by a single word, and hence the assistant brought three different wigs.

“What a beautiful color!”

“Yeah, this one is the closest to that character.”

She took out a wig from her bag, then the girls examined it, and in the end, they chose the same wig, which Koigasaki bought.

“Kashiwada, won’t you buy some too?”

“Eh? Kashiwada, will you cosplay too?” – asked Sakurai-san with tension on her face. Isn’t she trying to say that she wants to cosplay with Koigasaki alone and leave us already?

“Well, I’m going to cosplay with a friend.” If I’d say that I’m going to go to the same cosplay event with Koigasaki and Sakurai-san, things would get complicated, so I decided to omit it.

“Oh, I see.” – said Sakurai-san with an obviously relaxed face. I can read your face clearly, hey. So you relaxed when get to know that I won’t cosplay with Koigasaki?

“What kind of a wig are you looking for?” – the assistant asked.

“Well, with brown hairs, back hairs should be longer, with curly on sides...”

“Do you know the character name?”

“The main hero of Phi Kickers, his name is...”

“Oh, Masuaki! What do you think about this one?” – the assistant brought me

two wigs which fit my specific conditions.

“Thank you very much! This would be 3,800 yen.”

What an expense before I got my salary. Looking inside my pocket after the payment, I found there less than 2,000 yen. That’s sad conditions. Only four days left, once the 21st day of this month came, I’ll get my salary, – said I to myself.

Exiting the wig shop, Sakurai-san declared that we should go to “the Tomato”.

“Tomato? What’s that?”

“The shop of cheap cloth! I often buy cloth for my suits from there!”

Under the second Sakurai-san’s advice, we headed towards the “Tomato” and reached it in only five minutes. Inside the shop, we found an incredibly wide variety of different cloths.

“I guess, this cloth would be good for Hibine Ruru’s cosplay, Momo-chan. Look at this, only 200 yen per meter!”

“He... Is it cheap? Or high?”

“It’s cheap, of course! How much we would need, I wonder... No sleeves, mini-skirt, I guess we won’t need too much, but I don’t want to too little that it turned out to be not enough.” – said Sakurai-san with a glitter in her eyes.

“But this cloth is more lustrous, it’s similar to the image.” She seems to be happy just watching cloths. Also, she talks too much now, and have a lot of conversations with Koigasaki. I’ve impressed how much passion do she have to a cosplay. I’m looking at the cloths too, thinking how they would make that solid outfits from such a soft fabric?

“Kashiwada, I’ve chosen my cloth, and what about you?” – Koigasaki came to me with a tubular package with her cloth in both hands.

“I don’t have a slightest intention to make an outfit by my own, and I don’t like housecraft. I won’t make it from the scratch.”

Moreover, Koigasaki has a veteran of cosplay handcrafting Sakurai-san to help her, but I’m sure that Sakurai-san will never help me. Which makes handcrafting an outfit by myself impossible. I’ll have to buy a suit, whatever it will cost for

me.

“Okay. I’ll go to buy it, then.”

Sakurai-san has chosen her cloth as well, and hold it in her hands.

“Wait, Momo-chan, you have to buy laces and ribbon for sleeves!”

“Oh, sure!” – and they disappeared inside the shop. I was left alone. I pretended I’m looking the cloth wandering the shop. The thoughts of me buying a freaking expensive outfit made me depressed.

After a while, Koigasaki finished her shopping and we left the shop.

“Today we have bought almost everything! The only left is colored contact lenses.”

“Where are they sold?”

“You should better go to an ophthalmology and get a prescription. It’s no joke, you see. We can buy it together next time!”

“Okay, take me there then!”

My character has black eyes, so there is no need for me to buy lenses. Both my outfit and the wig are expensive, and I would got dismals if I would have to buy lenses on top of everything.

“Oh, look at the time!” – surprised Sakurai seeing her wristwatch.

“Azuki-chan, is your curfew that early?”

“Nope, Thunder Nine will start soon!”

Thunder Nine, huh... Basically, it’s a baseball anime for children and is loved by big women... To put it simply, this anime is popular among the Fujoshi. So it’s broadcasting in Sunday evenings... Which means, Sakurai-san is a fujoshi too?

“That’s bad! I have to hurry! I never missed an episode before!”

“No worries, feel free to return home.”

“Okay, I’m sorry. Good bye, then!”

Sakurai-san said “See you tomorrow” to Koigasaki (and only to her) and run to the station.

“You’re so nice towards Sakurai-san.” – I complained after she disappeared from our sight. I have a strange feeling that her way of acting towards me is completely different.

“Eh? I always act like this to women friends.”

“So you’re being unjust against only me?”

“Huh? Are you sure I’m unjust to you?”

“Of course! You always are!” Why she’s denying it?

“Well... Maybe I’m forgetting to be nice to you in comparison with other people.” –said Koigasaki after she had been thinking a while, I hope, about her attitude.

“I saw a term “tsundere” in the manga you lent me recently, where a girl acts rude to strangers and nice to a man of her heart.”

What does she trying to say all of sudden? It’s not a correct definition for a tsundere, first of all.

“I think I’m the contrary of a tsundere... eh... a deretsun? Like, I’m being nice to strangers.”

“What was that? It’s pain to eyes when somebody tries to explain own personality.”

Hey, wait a minute. According to her definition, she’s nice to strangers and... rude to a person she is in love with...

“Yes, I’m timid and nice in front of strangers, and I... Oh, wait! Stop! Forget it! I was wrong from the start.”

Yes, exactly. If Koigasaki were a deretsun that is nice to everyone but unjust to only me, then it would mean she is in love with me. This is absolutely impossible, and Koigasaki noticed this fact just now.

“Don’t worry, your talk is almost always is a half nonsense.”

“Huh?! How can I not worry about that? Why you’re such a rude? Why do you so mean to me only? You were trying to be nice to Azuki-chan!”

“That’s because she obviously hates me now.”

And I reaffirmed this fact today.

“Didn’t I tell you earlier, that there is no way she would hate you?”

Is she trying to console me?

“What a heat! I’m thirsty! Can we drop somewhere?”

“Uh, I thought about the same.”

There was McD nearby, so we headed there. My true intent was to go to a cheap café, though.

We made an order and took a seat, face-to-face position. This is the second time I’m in a café with Koigasaki, and I am not that nervous as I was before.

“By the way, what is the Thunder something that Azuki-chan mentioned? She had hurried so I couldn’t ask.”

“Thunder Nine? It’s a baseball anime for children.”

“For children? And Azuki-chan likes it?”

“That anime is also popular among the fujoshi.” – I said, unsure whether Koigasaki knows this word, but she faltered on hearing it.

“Fujoshi? Isn’t it about the girls who like love among boys?”

“Yeah. So you do know.”

I didn’t explain that term to Koigasaki.

“I’ve borrowed a manga from Azuki-cha, and she said that manga is popular among the fujoshi. It was interesting, but there was nothing similar to homosexual intercourse, and fujoshi means the women who like homosexual things? I don’t really understand.”

She is definitely a commoner! She uses “fujoshi” and “homosexual” with no hesitation. I thought a heroine will be with the main hero when I started reading that manga, but fujoshi-fans wish that the main hero and his male rival will be together in the end. I don’t understand it at all.”

“By the way, what manga did Sakurai-san lend to you?”

Sakurai mentioned three titles, and all of them are fujoshi manga.

“I think it’s not kind of manga that Suzuki-kun would like.”

“I said it from the start.”

Once Koigasaki said she wants otaku friends, I did warn her that women’s advice wouldn’t match with Suzuki’s preferences, just in case. However, it’s obvious that she didn’t listen to me.

“It seems I took a roundabout way, huh... Any case, I befriended with Azuki-chan, so this is a good thing in the end.” – said Koigasaki with disappointment on her face. Suddenly she seems to remember something.

“Oh, by the way, why did you come to the café today? I was frightened!”

“It just happened I had a business in Akiba, and it’s a Sunday hence no other cafés were free. Also, I didn’t know that you will be on shift today. Did you finish your training too quick?”

“Our training... Well, that was easy, because there is no need to serve customers. The kitchen work is something I’d call “a kitchen fairy”, there is other stuff actually doing the work. Our job is to get orders and carry meals to tables, and calculate them. Both I and Azuki-chan remembered all necessary from a senpai within an hour.”

“I see. But it was more look like you have been taught all the day.” – I said and regretted because it might be something that I should not have asked, but it was too late. Koigasaki has a dark face.

“So you did see that, after all...”

“It’s not that I’ve been watching you purposely. It’s just happened that I’ve noticed it.” I don’t want she know that she was in my scope all the time.

“Yes, you’re right! They have been warned me many times, and then I was scolded in the back. After that, I was removed from my shift and worked in the kitchen. They say it’s the first time a maid is moved to the kitchen.”

That means, that maid-like woman that took Koigasaki into the staff room, scolded her...

“But why? Did not you remember the training? What they were angry for?”

“Because I’m not talkative with customers.”

“Eh?”

I noticed Koigasaki is going to cry.

“I accepted that job without knowing I would have to talk with customers that much. Azuki-chan and I found a job posting for maids, and we accepted that job just because they give a good salary and suits are cute, we never visited that café before. I thought it would be a waitress-type job like in that café we were with you earlier.”

“And this one was completely different.”

“Exactly. The senpai and café manager said that to speak with customers and provide them a good time is one of the maid’s duties. I was told to approach to a customer, but I could not do that; and even when one of the customers begun to speak, I was so nervous I replied nothing to him. That is awful.”

I doubted that Koigasaki who is on bad terms with men is able to work as a maid, and I was right. I was about to say that she had to think more, but I’m no better. I started to work in the karaoke thinking I would have a chance to talk with some girls, and now the karaoke is the saddest place for me now. It seems both Koigasaki and me in the same situation.

“And this is not all! As for now, I’ve never been selected so I’m fine for a while, I’ll have to play games with a customer or take instant photos with him. I have a real feeling that it’s impossible for me.”

“And this is your mood on the first day... Can you continue this job?”

“I’ll continue to do what I can, that was me who decided to work there after all. Azuki-chan helps me, too.” – said Koigasaki with a deadly pale face. I can praise that spirit of your, though.

“By the way, there is one thing I have to tell you.” – I suddenly remembered and changed the topic.

“Eh? What is it?”

“Did you tell Sakurai-san that you’re going to do that cosplay to befriend with Suzuki? Or that you’re aiming to be an otaku for him?”

“Eh? I didn’t tell about Suzuki in the first place.”

“I think you should not tell her at all. Especially that you’re striving for cosplay to befriend with Suzuki.”

“Why?”

“Why, did you ask? Sakurai-san is passionate to a cosplay itself. She won’t be happy hearing your reasons.”

“...” – Koigasaki started to think about something.

“There is one thing I thought when you cosplayed the Love Minus. Those who cosplay a character they not just don’t like, but don’t really know about, are not valued by the people who truly love to cosplay. Therefore, if you would have to talk with another cosplayer at an event, you shouldn’t admit that you don’t know your character. It would be the best if you study at least your character in good time. Cosplay is a way to enjoy a character or a work that you like, to begin with. And you will be able a common topic with Suzuki when you meet him there.”

Koigasaki started to think about something again. She may talk back to my sermon, so I have to prepare myself. However...

“That’s true.” – unexpectedly answered Koigasaki with a serious face.

“What character I’m going to cosplay? From a game?”

“No! Did not I explained you earlier?”

“Oh! An android!”

“No! A vocaloid! A PC software that dancing and singing. Go find at least its name and description on the net, at least! Also, if you would have some time, watch your vocaloid on the Nico, so you’ll get a grasp of what kind of character it is and hear its voice.”

“What is the Nico?”

“Nico Nico Douga, a video streaming website. Search for it on google once came home!”

I guess she knows nothing about her character.

“By the way, I have something to ask you, too. Have you decided where to go

with Hasegawa-san?”

“No, I haven’t.”

She remembered me the fact I was trying to forget. Today will be the week since I gave my mail address to Hasegawa, and I have not received a single email from her. Therefore, I cannot decide anything. Moreover, it may mean that we don’t go anywhere; she does not want to go with me.

“It’s an unrelated question, but...”

“What is it?”

“Let’s say a guy shared his email with you, and asked you to write him another day. Why would you not mail him?”

“Because I don’t want to, naturally. Either I’m not interested in him, or I don’t like him.”

“As I thought!!!” – I overreacted, embracing my head.

“So there is no mail from Hasegawa-san? It has been about a week since then...”

“It’s not connected, I said...”

“I think it’s a mistake to just give a girl your address. What kind of a plant would wait for an email from a girl?”

A plant? Isn’t she trying to say I’m a plant-eating type of man?

“Listen to me. In the day after tomorrow, you have to ask her email after school.”

“How can I ask it from a girl that hates me so much she won’t email me?”

“It’s not like you’re hatred for sure. She might just have forgotten about you.”

“That is none better! Also, she would think of me as a bother, if I had her have my address and now I’m asking for her address.”

“That is just fine. That what do a meat-eating guy who pretends to be a plant-eating guy! A rolled cabbage guy is a popular type nowadays!”

What again? A rolled cabbage is a meat inside leaves. Oh, I see.

“Okay, I got it. The day after tomorrow, I’ll ask her whether she decided where she wants to go, and at the same time I’ll ask her address if I could.”

“Get rid of that “could” thing. You’ll ask her.”

Hey, I would be unable to speak to her if she declined me there! We managed to speak for a little recently. It seems Koigasaki’s curfew is close, so we left the café and headed home.

*

Tomorrow is the Marine Day, a day off in the school. I had no job so I’ve played games all the day. The next day, Tuesday, I was going to talk to Hasegawa, as Koigasaki instructed me. However, that day ended while I was struggling. Then I started thinking, if I told her to email me when she would decide where to go, and there is no answer till now, she might not have decided yet. Which means, if I ask her about her decision now, it might look like a demand. The day ended while I was thinking in this way.

Today I made up my mind to ask her today, but Kiritani talked to me instead, and when I looked again at her seat Hasegawa was gone. That’s sad, but there is nothing I can do. Kiritani went to his baseball club activities, and I changed my shoes and headed to the exit.

This happened on the road from the school to a station. I saw the back of a familiar person. It’s Hasegawa. What an incredible coincidence to see her in this place. She is squatting at a stray cat.

“Hasegawa?” – I gathered all my courage and approached to her. Hasegawa turned to me with no word.

“A cat? What a cutie.”

A little black cat is sitting still while Hasegawa flatters it. Well, the cat is cute, but Hasegawa is way more cutie doing this. Is it mean that Hasegawa likes cats? That is not a fit for her cold image. However, the cat has run away as soon as I approached.

“Oh, I’m sorry.”

“It’s nothing.”

Hasegawa replied steadily. Usually, in this situation, she could get angry, but this is her usual way of speaking. I conclude that Hasegawa is not angry.

“Would you mind if we go the station together?” – I thought it would be unnatural to go apart, so I suggested it.

“Okay.”

I sighed out when she agreed. This is the second time I’m coming from the school along with Hasegawa (it’s only to the station, though). To come from the school along with a girl I like was one of my dreams when I was a junior high school student, so I can say one of them come true. Yet, I cannot be happy with this alone. My ultimate goal is to go out with Hasegawa. And this is my battle.

“Hey, did you come up with an idea where to go? Well, it’s okay if you’re still thinking...” – I asked the question that bothered me the most, using the momentum of inviting her to come together.

“Regarding that... Is it really fine for me to choose any place to go?”

“Yes, of course!”

“But Koigasaki-san will come with us, right? Maybe it would be reasonable to ask her opinion?”

“Not at all. This time, I and Koigasaki are expressing our gratitude, so it is up to you, really!”- I was so nervous I said it too loud.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, we’ll go anywhere.”

“Then... Odaiba.”

“Yes, there is a park with an outlet to the sea... I don’t remember its name, unfortunately...”

“A park with an outlet to the sea? I got it!”

I’ll look up for it on the net when I got home. Hasegawa wants to visit Odaiba... It was unexpected. Hearing this name, I can’t imagine either the Comiket or a place where the reals would come to.

“I always thought about one strange thing...”

“Eh?!” – I was surprised Hasegawa to start talking to me.

“Kashiwada-kun, why did you speak to me?”

“Eh?” – asked Hasegawa with a serious face, with her eyes fixed on me. Her black hair was blown by the wind. I’m confused by the unexpected question. How could expect she would ask me its reason? I have no skills the reals possess to say just that I want to befriend with her, because the fact I’m in love with Hasegawa will be almost revealed.

“You did it because I’m always alone?” – said Hasegawa with an ephemeral feeling on her face. That surprised me as well. Does she think I spoke to her out of compassion, or I did it in mercy?

“N-not at all!” – I denied it loudly, and Hasegawa startled by my scream. If I’m denying it, so I have to tell her the true reason. Should I say my true feelings now? Well, it’s fully clear what would happen if I confess right here.

“You know, I...” – I gathered my courage.

“I saw you before the entrance ceremony.”

“The entrance ceremony?”

“Yes. You were walking in front of me. Then, a little elementary school girl had fallen near you, and you did rouse her, didn’t you? Your beautiful smile is engraved in my memory... However, an atmosphere around in the school is cool and cold; it severely differs from when I saw you for the first time. So it was interesting for me, what kind of person are you? And such...”

Wow-wow, hey, stop! Didn’t I say too much? Can she realize my feelings from this? Wasn’t I too close to a confession? I’ve intended to say truth, but not confess my feelings!

“...I see.” – said Hasegawa with her casual face. And, that’s all? I’ve said so much I feel ashamed, and yet her answer is as plain as usually.

“I’ve been thinking this earlier, but... You’re a strange guy, Kashiwada-kun.”

“Eh?” Strange, you say? Did you think I said something strange? Casting a glance on Hasegawa, I see her quiet smile. My heart skipped a beat.

“Yes, that is a strange way to take an interest in me. All the people who speak

to me are strange, in the first place. I'm not a skillful speaker, and my company is always in trouble talking with me. That is the reason I thought it strange for you to speak to me."

"I don't think so! I'm sure there are plenty of people who would want to speak with you."

In fact, many of classmates talking about Hasegawa, everybody is interested in her and I guess they would like to have a talk with her. Nevertheless, they see Hasegawa as a high flower, which you can't approach to, and they don't have enough of courage.

Hasegawa's eyes are opened wide, she seems to be surprised by my words.

"May I ask you a question, then?"

"Sure."

"Why did you become a class representative?" I always couldn't understand it. She is not a type of a person who would want to stand out, neither she wants to add a string to school recommendations. Then, why would she undertake such a bothersome duty? Nobody forced her to, in fact.

"... Because a class representative has to do many things during breaks and after school lessons."

"Huh?" It is not a reason.

"So what?"

"Normal students talk with their friends and have their clubs after school and at breaks, but I have no intent to enter a club, and usually I'm free at breaks."

"Eh? You're free at breaks?"

"Yes, I was free at breaks from long ago, and I thought nothing will change in a high school."

Is it means she never had friends? This is too sad to say it loud.

"That is why I thought it would be better if I'll do that duty. Nobody wanted to be a class representative anyways, and I had been a class representative in junior high school too so I used to it."

“That means you have become a class representative for classmates’ sake?”

“I would not say that much.”

As I thought, she is a kind person. No, she’s even kinder than I thought. I was right about her. She’s kind, however due to her coolness the classmates probably misunderstanding her. It would be great if there were no such misunderstandings. I wish I had enough power to dispel it.

“Oh, I remembered.” – suddenly said Hasegawa and took something from her pocket. What is this dirty and torn piece of paper? It seems somehow familiar...

“This is the email address you gave to me. I’ve tried to send an email to you, but it returned an error.”

“Wha...?!”

Yes. This is the piece of paper from a student’s notebook with my email address written by my hand.

“Let me see...” I took the piece of paper and trying to check my own address.

What is going on, one letter is missing. Hasegawa has tried to send me an email, but she could not because of my mistake. I’m feeling very happy inside.

“I’m sorry, I’ve made a mistake here!”

I’ve taken a ball pen out from my chest pocket and corrected the address.

“By the way... Would you mind if... if... if... if we exchange... email addresses? W-well, it would be bad to make you send me an email...” – I was stunned and relied upon my body to ask Hasegawa’s address.

“Okay.”

Upon receiving her consent, we’ve started the exchange to obtain the long-awaited Hasegawa’s email address. I was so happy I believe I’ve emitted infrared light.

“Goodbye then, I’m heading to a subway.”

I’ve just noticed we’ve come to the station.

“Oh, uh! See you tomorrow!”

“Sure, see you tomorrow.” – replied Hasegawa and took her route. I watched Hasegawa’s back until she disappeared from my sight, and then took my mobile phone again. I open the phonebook, and watch the sign, “Hasegawa Midori”. It’s hard to believe even now. I managed to get her email address! My hand is trembling.

I always remember with pleasure today’s conversation with Hasegawa.

Chapter 7

Tomorrow, I will have my summer vacations started. The last day of the first semester is over, I'm going to the bike parking, taking my bike and started to ride listening to my iPod. I'm listening to the Shinsei Kamattechan – "Summer vacation at 23 years". Recently, I hear this song frequently.

I was listening to this song the previous summer too. I can't help but want to listen to it, once summer comes, and this year I'll listen to it as well. I like this song, I have a strong feeling of affinity with it. However, there will be no "I have no plans, I go nowhere" from this song. It was true for the previous year, but this year I have a plan to go to Odaiba with Hasegawa! I'm so happy I want to scream aloud!

I've dropped to a local bookshop to read there something about Odaiba (I have no such money to buy that) to find recommendations where to go on a date. Joypolis, VenusFort, Daikanransha... that would be too much for the first time. She said she wants to go to a park with an outlet to the sea, so I guess Odaiba Seaside Park will be good. I visited Odaiba only along with Komiket at the Big Sight and at Fuji TV excursion in grade school.

Oh, by the way, Koigasaki will go too, so I'd talk to her. She must had been played in Odaiba. I thought, and sent her an email with no hesitation.

[I've asked Hasegawa where she wants to go, and she pointed Odaiba. Where should I go with her in Odaiba?]

She replied quickly.

[Well... Joypolis, I gue-ess? I hadn't been there so much. I don't know either. To choose a place to go is important, bu-ut... Apart from tha-at, should not you buy some clothes first? Are not you going to wear that big brother-ish clo-oths, are you?

Clothes? She's right. I didn't buy single clothes since then. Despite the fact I'm aiming to be the reals. I had no money before, but I'll have my salary tomorrow.

I have been on a shift only twice, so I guess I'll have a little more than 10,000 yen. However I'm grateful for this. I'll have to spend that money to buy clothes, which I'll wear when we go to Odaiba.

I returned magazines with articles about dates in Odaiba, and took men fashion magazines. What men cosplay magazines are doing here? Let's take a look. It's sewed so I can't look inside. Oh, I have to buy a cosplay outfit as well... The event where I plan to go with Suzuki is at the end of this month, so I have no time. I have to buy it while I have time to.

Okay! Once I get my salary, I will have to buy clothes for the date and a cosplay outfit. There is one problem. I don't want to fail like I did last time. I understood that there is a high possibility that the clothes I find to be pretty good are actually awful from a girl's point of view. I guess it would be the best if I let fashion chief (for me) Koigasaki to judge my clothes.

[Koigasaki, do you have plans for tomo-orrow?]

Crap, I've infected with her writing style. What a nasty, I won't use it anymore.

[I dooooo not want to go tomorrow, buut... I am on my shift from afternoon till evening.]

Her email was super-negative. Does she hate her job that much? Well, I hate the karaoke too. If Koigasaki is busy tomorrow, then I will change the day to go shopping. However, the day after tomorrow is my shift in the karaoke. I put my phone into the pocket, left the bookshop, and rode home.

When I arrived home, my sister watched the TV alone in the living room.

"Hello, I'm home."

"..."

"Hey, I've greeted you."

"Shut up Naoki, your barking corrupts the beautiful voice of Ta-sama!"

"Huh?"

I noticed that she watched not a TV, but a live show by DVD. Oh, this is the handsome voice actor that my sister likes, Mizukami Takuma (fan call him Ta-

sama). And this is one DVD of the live series with handsome voice actors. My sister is an otaku like me. Moreover, she is a fujoshi.

“Did you bought it?”

“My friend lent to me. Naoki, you should follow his example! Isn’t he cool?”

I have no interest in handsome actors, but I looked on the screen. A handsome guy that you could mistake him for an idol danced and sang there. ... He is cool for sure. I assent with Akari. His face is cool, but his hairstyle and fashion are impeccable. Akari especially fainted seeing a red streak amid his black hair. His original tones of pink red and black make him a stand out character.

“He’s cool...”

“I told you!”

“I wonder where are this clothes sold?”

“Ta-sama makes his outfit by himself! He loves to dress up! There is a brand shop for punks in Harajuku, the only place to get that outfit.”

Akari told me about his outfit and even told me shop’s name and the brand.

“Thanks, Akari.”

“But, why would you ask about the brand name? Don’t you thinking to wear this, do you? Naoki, don’t do it, these clothes will never ever suit you!”

I thanked Akari and run quickly to my PC. I made researches on the net. Look likes Akari said something when I left the room, but I didn’t hear that. I found an official website of that brand. Looking at the catalog page, I found many original yet cool clothes. Also, its location is very clear, it is the straight road from Harajuku station. Prices are bit high, but in Arouse where I was with Koigasaki, or in 10812, prices are even higher.

“That is it!” Tomorrow I’ll take my salary and buy clothes in this shop! I can do this by myself, even without Koigasaki!

The next I went to a bank and withdrew my salary. It was about 14,000 yen, which makes around 15,000 in total. Right after this, I headed to Harajuku. Then I found the building “La Foret” using phone maps, and reached it within five

minutes. I took the elevator to the floor where the shop located, and when the doors opened, I saw the shop in front of me.

“Mister, what are you looking for today?” – a shop assistant spoke to me once I’ve entered the shop I started to look on clothes. I won’t make the same mistake twice! I should not decide quickly. I have to try on different suits. With the assistant’s help, I found three suits that I like, and decided to try on one of them. I passed my arm into the sleeve and look in the mirror in the dressing room.

Well... The suit itself might be nice, but I in the mirror is as lame as always.

“How did you like it, mister?” – asked the assistant and I opened the curtains.

“This size perfectly fits you! And it suits you very good!” I’m not used to praise, but it makes me feel good. I’ve tried on three clothes, and bought one that I felt would fit me. I have to buy a cosplay outfit as well, so I bought a T-shirt only. The T-shirt has a big skull printed on it, and its hem looks like it’s broken. I have boots at home, so I guess that is fine.

I managed to spend only about 4,000 yen in this shop. I left the shop with the feeling of satisfaction and headed straight to the station. I have to evade from looking to other shops because I want to save my money.

“I’m sorry...” – someone spoke to me. That person was a young woman with bright hair and somehow unusual hairstyle. She’s dressed well, a pretty woman I’d say. It is the first time a woman speaks to me on the street, so I stopped. What is it? Would she make me her lover and then blackmail me with her husband? Or maybe she’d ask me to show my lines of the palm or sold me somewhere? Or she’d sell me a pot for a high price?

“I’m working as a beautician in the beauty salon nearby.” – she said and gave me her visit card with the salon’s name, map, and her name. That’s true she looks like a beautician. Is she looking for a client?

“I’m looking for a man who would like to be our coloring model. We are ready to listen to his preferences, and we set the special price of 1,000 yen. What do you think of it?”

Coloring for only 1,000 yen? If I remember correctly, the cheapest coloring

was no less than 1,000 yen. Isn't it a loss for them rather than profit?

"One thousand?"

"Yes. However, we will show you to a few people, if you don't mind of it."

It's a testing work, apparently. That's where such a low price comes from.

"Can I choose any color?"

The previous time, it was a big failure to color hair fair, so I decided to stay away from hair dye for a time being, but things are different if a pro would do this for me.

"However we'd like you to constraint from pure black, so any other color would do."

"What about black with red streaks?" – I remembered an image of actor "Ta-sama".

"That would be completely fine."

"I see. I'm ready, then!"

It took around five minutes to come to the beauty salon. Then she said she has to talk with a superior and asked me to wait, and after a while, she came along with a sempai-like man beautician. He was playing with my hair and spoke with me. He asked me which color I'd like to dye my hair, brought dye samples and make me choose, so I selected bright red color. After that, he asked what part I want to dye, and I explained it to be the similar forelock with the handsome voice actor "Ta-sama" I saw on the DVD yesterday. At last, the beautician put the dye on, waited for a while, and washed the dye off.

While he's drying my hair, I'm looking in the mirror. Only a part of my forelock hair is dyed in red. This red is very close to that of Ta-sama. The impression is severely changed, despite all I did is dyed my hair is a new color. I'm feeling like I've been born again.

That is perfect. I think if I wear the T-shirt of the Ta-sama's brand that I bought recently, I'll become another human being.

"What do you think about it?" – asked the beautician.

“This is awesome! Thank you very much!” – I replied with expression. Upon paying the 1,000 yen I returned home in the high mood.

Standing in front the threshold, I thought. What, if this outrageous hair doesn't suit usually plain me? I'm sure if my family see this look, they'll make fun of me. I passed the threshold with a feeling of running to the inevitable.

I took of my plain brown shirt and put on the new branded Ta-sama's T-shirt. I put down my current clothes in the branded bag and opened door to the living room with an anticipation on my face.

“I'm home.”

“Hel..lo...” –said my sister who sat on the sofa playing with her phone. Did she freeze because of the sudden change in her brother?

“Nao...ki?”

My sister's face stunned.

“What happened to you?”

“I was in Harajuku, the favorite shop of the voice actor you like, and bought it there! I was tough...”

In that moment, something bumped in my head. It seems Akari threw a stuffed toy that was in her hands.

“It hurts, you know!”

“It unbelievable!!! Why on the Earth would choose the Ta-sama's outfit out?! That wrong! The likes of you could never look like Ta-sama! The material itself is different on 120%!”

My sister was on edge when she completely rejected me.

“Why? I'm the other human, but it looks similar, isn't it?”

“Don't you dare to violate my Ta-sama! You stupid Naoki! This outfit is cool as long as Ta-sama wears it! I thought you asked me to put it on yourself! And I did tell you that it will not suit you! And I was completely right! Mom! Naoki again...”

“Why do you complain to mom for every single thing.”

Our mom heard Akari's voice and walked down.

"Naoki, you... You bought eccentric clothes again..." – she said trying to hold laughter.

"But this is cool, isn't it? Both clothes and hairstyle?"

"It is not suited for you, Naoki, neither it's cool on you. Could you please turn it back?" – screamed Akari punching my chest with both hands.

"Are you... kidding..." – I was shocked and returned to my room.

I looked in the mirror once again. ... At least, this is better than before, I guess... I still couldn't believe what my mother and Akari said. Oh, I have to ask her! It would be the worst to make a bad impression to Hasegawa over a wrong choice of clothes. I took out my phone make a full-length shot of me in the mirror.

[To: Koigasaki Momo]

[Subject: What do you think about these clothes?]

[Text: none; Attached image]

I've attached the photo and sent the mail to her. The reply came within a couple of minutes.

[... What is this? Won't you say you bought it, I hope?]

[I did it today.] – I humbly replied to Koigasaki, anticipating she would get angry.

[Why did you choose that outfit? Well, that's fine until you're home, but don't go outside like this. Especially, it's a death flag if you would go in this with a girl.]

A "death flag"? Koigasaki knows such an otaku-ish term? I don't know whether she found it on the net or heard from Sakurai-san. Yet, despite becoming more otaku-ish, she used this term wrong.

Oh, it's not a time to admire her. The most important part is wearing this is a death flag. Oh, I got it. In other words, girls would react badly if I'd wear these clothes. I got it.

[But why? Isn't it super cool? It's a branded skirt from a handsome voice actor!]

[I don't know your handsome voice actor. I don't know what an otaku would think about it either. However, most of the girls will hate it. Hey, what is happened with your head? Whose hair is that?]

She rejected me, and asked about my hair.

[Are you serious?.. I had a beautician to add some red streaks.]

[What?! Why would you do such a nonsense? It is not the first time, though. Even in mere chance of this hair suit you, a rare girl will say she likes it.]

I fell on all fours. This pattern is happening again. I bought it, changed my hairstyle, and was said it's awful. Why on the earth a fashion that girls would like is so different from what I think it suits me? Well, I guess I should be happy I came to know that girls would think this is a lame outfit before I went to Odaiba with Hasegawa. I fixed my hair in upper position, run to a supermarket in tears, bought a black dye there and restored my hair that very day.

Next day, I had my shift. I slowly got myself ready and headed to the station where my work situated, in two stations from mine. I decided to overcome myself for money, but I can't get used to this so far. I guess that creepy-flashy guy would teach me again, and I will not be able to speak with anybody else.

I arrived to work, changed my clothes, and they said me to go to the front. This creepy-flashy guy is in charge of me. I used to job itself, but it's too harsh to be with him alone.

"Kato, do you go to the next barbecue?" – asked him a woman from the kitchen (they doing the most of the meals by nuking it). They used to talk often if there are no customers. Of course, I never participated in.

"Sure, I'm coming!"

"Did Aya-chan said she can come too? It means almost all of us will be coming."

"Yes, she did."

A barbecue? Which means, the staff is going to barbecue? I wasn't invited,

and it's not an atmosphere I could be invited. I certainly don't want to go, but it's so hard when they don't invite me I would cry.

"Oh, Kato, carry this one to room 302, I have to carry this one."

"Sure!"

"Then, Kashiwagi-kun, right? The front is yours."

"Okay."

I'm Kashiwada, but it doesn't matter. Takayama-san (the woman in the kitchen) and Kato (the creepy-flashy guy) went to deliver meals, so I'm alone. I remembered the duties at the front, so it's easier to be alone now. I'm not hurt that much.

But now another employee returned. I have met him once, Yamamoto-san.

"Oh, the newcomer-kun, you can work at the front alone already?" –asked Yamamoto-san with a friendly smile.

He is a tall bright man, probably a university student. I like the impression he left.

"Yes."

"By the way, are you invited to a barbecue? It seems this time they go with all of the staff."

"Oh, really?"

"Yes, it will be the next Sunday at the Showa Kinen Park in Tachikawa. Will you come?"

"Oh, I already have plans for that day. I'm sorry." – I lied.

"I see. What a shame."

Yamamoto-san is the only person among the staff I can easily approach to. Other staff members like him as well. I wish I will be like him.

"By the way, are you a senior high student, Kashiwada-kun? What is your grade?"

"Yes, the first grade."

“Really? My little sister is the first grade too.”

Until a customer came, we had a trivial talk with Yamamoto-san. This is the only good time at work.

After I finished the work and returned home, I've checked the website of the used cosplay outfit shop. I tried to find a way to buy cheap clothes by the net after visiting Akiba cosplay shop that day, and online auctions were great, but registration is closed for those under 18 years old. After that, I found a bulletin board with cosplay outfit trading, where people sell outfits that don't wear anymore directly, with no mediators. Therefore, I can buy it there for a cheap price.

Few days in a row I've been checked the board for an outfit of the character I'm going to cosplay. I've found about three interesting advertisements. One of them had no buyer, and the price was only 3,000 yen, however the seller said it's a work of an inexperienced crafter so no claims or return. I do not actually want a high-quality suit, because all I going to do is to follow Koigasaki and Suzuki wearing it. Therefore, I sent an email from PC to the seller.

A few hours later, I received an answer with the photo of the outfit, and I found no visible problems with it. Also the seller said that there are other interested parties and he will sell to the first who decide to buy. There is no other place where I could buy it for 3,000 yen. After I thoroughly searched the net, the lowest price was more than 10,000 yen. I quickly replied that I've decided to buy, and I've bought it.

To prevent fraud, I decided to go by the cash on delivery service, where you pay money only when goods received. Now I don't have to worry about a cosplay outfit anymore. I have less than 10,000 yen for now, and I will have less than 7,000 yen after the cosplay outfit bought. That is more than I expected to have due to the cheap suit.

Okay, I made my decision! I'll spend the remains for a good clothes to go with Hasegawa! Overall, I all I have now are a plain ugly outfit from my junior high school, the brother-like outfit I bought recently, which was ridiculed by Koigasaki, and the punk T-shirt that was ridiculed by my family and Koigasaki. Crap, I have nothing to wear.

If I would find something by myself again and buy it, there is a high possibility of something bad happens. I thought to ask Suzuki about clothes that would suit me, however a lot of clothes that would suit handsome man Suzuki will not suit me. I might waste all my money if I fail this time, to begin with.

I gathered my resolution and created a mail.

[To: Koigasaki Momo]

[I don't know what clothes I should buy to go with Hasegawa to Odaiba. And I don't want to fail again, so can you to go shopping with me?]

She replied quickly as always.

[You surely may fail again. I have no choice, I guess. But you'll help me on the cosplay event in return!]

Can I think that she's okay? I didn't expect her to agree so easy. It was a right choice to tell her about a cosplay that Suzuki would like. After this, we confirmed that we both are free tomorrow, and agreed to meet tomorrow at the afternoon on 1 PM in Harajuku, and our conversation ended for today.

*

When I arrived at the JR Harajuku station, the exit to Takeshita Street, Koigasaki has already waited for me.

"I'm sorry..."

"Let's go already!" – she said and started to go.

"By the way, it seems you had no shifts today." – I asked and Koigasaki faltered.

"Yes, well... I've been working two days in a row, yesterday, and the day before."- she replied with a sullen face. I got it, you don't want to talk about your work anymore.

"You know, I have to say a thing beforehand..."

"Eh? What is it?"

"I'd like to ask you to consider my low-budget situation..." – I demanded.

"Eh? I thought to go to Arouse... Can't you afford it?"

“Arouse? No-no, there is no way I can...”

She had dragged me to the Arouse. There are many nice clothes, but I was so poor I could afford any of clothes there.

“That’s because you bought that strange shirt and got a strange hairstyle. Why would waste your money this way always? Apart from that, you did buy that brother-ish suit earlier.”

“I completely agree with you.”

I have a feeling I should not buy clothes without her for good.

“Let’s see... Let’s go to Hanjiro, then. It’s cheap, and they are selling menswear.”

“Hanjiro?”

Walking along Takeshita Street, I saw the signboard “Hanjiro” in a neighboring street. They sell clothes for both men and women. I looked on a random label and calmed down by its low price.

“Why it’s so cheap here?”

“Because it’s a used clothes shop.”

Used clothes... I see.

Excited by those prices, I’ve run around in the shop, forgetting about Koigasaki. I took nice clothes in my hand and felt the presence behind my back.

“You’re looking at the strange clothes again. I can’t believe! Would you have bought that one if I haven’t stop you?”

“E? Isn’t it strange? Is it a bad one?”

Koigasaki dramatically sighed out.

“It seems you have not only a sense of fashion, but even a sense of clothes. Nice cloth will not necessarily suit you, you know?”

“Oh...”

This means when I had bought the clothes previous time and before the previous, I was sure it suits me, despite it wasn’t.

“I have to say you one more thing. If you want to be popular among usual girls, you should stay by the safe side. I think you should choose that outfit only in the case a girl you want to go out with likes Urahara alleys fashion, or punks, or gothic lolis. However, those are extremely rare fashions and you should restrain yourself from that if you don’t have enough self-confidence in own apprehending of a particular fashion. I don’t know much about those fashions, but at least that outfit is hard to match with other fashions.

“I... I see.”

I didn’t know that, so I’ve reached my hand to highly specialized fashion clothes.

“I think you know that, but Hasegawa-san is not that kind of a girl. A casual neat type. I saw her in her casual wear. She was dressed simply yet smartly, so I guess she pays attention to guy’s clothes.”

Really? Summary, she saw me when I had been wearing that fail in karaoke and now she might think just about anything in her mind.

“Finally, you’re the novice in dressing, besides, you are not going to wear personal fashion style clothes, thus you may barely mistake is you choose a casual “safe” clothes that suit you.”

“What kind of casual safe clothes will suit me? I don’t understand that.” – I said and a moment later, I was given clothes by Koigasaki.

“I’ve chosen this closes right now. Try it on. Every time you try clothes on, you will have to open curtains and show yourself to me. I’ll decide then.”

“O-Okay...”

I did as Koigasaki said and I had been trying on five clothes in total. When I tried the first one and obediently opened the curtains...

“Hm... Your legs are surprisingly short, so this one won’t suit you. Next.”

Shut up.

“I guess we can cover that up with this... Next.”

Cover up what?!

“Oh, so this is how it came... Next.”

What came?!

“Well... isn’t it fine?”

After the fifth clothes have been tried, Koigasaki decided a check light blue shirt with short sleeves and beige chinos pants, so I bought them. I spent 2,000 yen and 4,000 yen, fair price I guess, and I’m inside the budget. By the way, the clothes I bought by her advice are pretty, however I think of them to be plain, and I’m not sure this would be good.

“We finished with shopping! Thanks a lot!”

“You’re above the passing mark with these clothes. Now we have only your untidy eyebrows and hair left.” – sighed Koigasaki upon looking at me.

“How many days passed since you touched them for the last time? I mean your eyebrows.”

“Eh? I fixed them up yesterday.”

Koigasaki was shocked.

“Yesterday? But your eyebrows are as shaggy and thick as ever! How did you fix them up?”

“Well, I have trimmed excessive hairs around...”

“That is not what you call fixing up!” – Koigasaki sighed out with expression.

“You should go to a beautician and have him to fix your eyebrows up, so you could get an idea what it is.”

“A beautician? I won’t have such money until the next salary!”

“...” – Koigasaki is thinking with a tough face.

“Are you busy after this?”

“Eh?” – I could not hide my surprise.

“I’m free all the day.”

“I don’t mind teach you how to trim eyebrows...”

“R-really?”

“You are so-o hopeless!” – said Koigasaki with disappointment on her face. It annoyed me, but I decided to keep silent because Koigasaki can cancel this proposition.

“Well, you did tell me about a cosplay that Suzuki-kun would like...”

“Oh...”

Does she imply that it’s a gratitude? What a noble action.

“So what? Do you come or not?”

“Come? To where?”

“To my home, where else can I do it? I have to go home to get scissors anyway.”

Her home?! Will we get into her home?

“So what?”

“Eh? Yes, I’m going!” – I replied quickly.

During the next thirty minutes, we had been jolting in a coach, and at least we arrived at the station where Koigasaki lives. This is the nearest station from our school as well. After walking for ten minutes, we came to Koigasaki’s house. This is the second time I’m coming here, yet trembling in front of this gorgeous mansion is not gone.

“Today, my mother and grandma are not home.”

This fact intensified my excitement.

As Koigasaki said, there was nobody at home, so we passed the living room and came upstairs to her room. Koigasaki stopped in front of the door.

“I have to change my clothes, wait here.” – said Koigasaki so I have to wait here.

“Come in.” – she said, and I entered the room. Seeing Koigasaki, I’ve lost my words.

“What is this princess’s clothes on you?”

“Huh? It’s a roomwear. Where does a princess come from? I don’t want to

crush my school suit.”

This roomwear is a pink one-piece dress below the knees length. Does she wear a dress in home? I wear a jersey or even pants only at home.

“Okay, try this on.” – said Koigasaki and gave me the bag with the clothes that we have brought from Harajuku.

“But I have tried these...”

“Do it quick.”

“I have no choice, then...”

I don’t understand her. Well, anyway. I started to unbutton my clothes.

“W-wait you!!! Why do you undress right here? You pervert!” – suddenly, Koigasaki called me a pervert and threw a heart-shaped cushion in me. Her face is red now...

“You did say to change clothes here!”

“But how can you do that in front of a girl? It’s unbelievable. ...Tell me when you got your clothes changed.” – said Koigasaki on the run out of the room and rapidly closed the door.

“I’m ready.” – I have Koigasaki back to the room. She looked at me and said no word, and silently pointed to a chair in front of a dresser. Then she took out small scissors from the dresser’s drawer.

“It would be best to pull them out, but I cannot do that. The only choice left is to cut them. What are you doing, turn to me!”

“Eh?”

I obediently turned to Koigasaki, and then she bent forward and started to cut my eyebrows.

“You’re so lame fixing your eyebrows! That’s awful!”

“What can I do? I don’t know the method!”

Koigasaki’s face is close to me, and her hair is waving exhaling a palatable scent. In addition, the upper part of her dress stooped and the décolletage has got wider so that I barely see her underwear on her modest breast. I can feel

my heart is pounding much faster. I thought to point this to her, she would get angry either way. However, her face was so serious I decided not to bother her.

“It’s ready.”

“Okay.”

My face in the mirror was somehow different from usual. It was a surprise to me that to have the eyebrows fixed up like this influences the impression so much.

“Also, here. This is straightening wax for hair I bought by mistake. Guys are straightening their hair, right? I don’t use it, so you can have it.”

“A..are you sure?” – Koigasaki gave me the wax. I’ve opened the lid and surprised.

“This one is completely different from what I have bought earlier.”

I surprised even more when I took some by my finger. It’s very dense. No match to the soft wax I’ve bought.

“I think hair will not stay straight if wax is not as dense as this.”

“Really? That means, my hair was not straightened because my wax was too soft!”

I tried to put the wax on my finger to hair. I was surprised when my hair hardened.

“The dense wax is awesome!”

“You’re... really lamentable.” – Koigasaki gave a pitying look on excited me.

“I think you become better this way.”

“Eh?”

“There is a full-length mirror.”

I stood in front of that mirror.

“Eh?”

I lost my words seeing the reflection.

“Is this... me?”

There was a nice man.

“I’m beautiful!”

Straightened by the wax hair, the eyebrows are not either too narrow or too thick, and the clothes look like from a magazine.

“I have to warn you that it’s not a handsome at all. This is what a usual man looks like.” – proudly said Koigasaki, implying that this is completely her achievement. Yet, this is her sole achievement in fact.

“Thank you very much!”

I gazed in the own reflection for a while. I couldn’t believe that it’s my reflection.

“Don’t be so naïve. This is the look you have to maintain on your own all the time if you want to become a riajuu.” – said Koigasaki, but I didn’t listen to her now.

“Also, this is the look of you when you will be going to Odaiba with Hasegawa-san, this is out of the question. You have to be able to make yourself this way alone!”

“Oh, yes! I understood! I’ll give my best!”

If Koigasaki is able to do this, I should be able as well after some time of training.

“The eyebrows won’t grow long quickly, but they will in three days, so you’ll have to fix them.” – Koigasaki started a lecture looking at me in the mirror.

“First, the hairs that are far from your eyebrows. You have to either pull them out with tweezers or shave with a razor. Then, you cut the hairs that run over the line of the eyebrows using scissors, and you should never shave the inner part of the eyebrows.”

“I wonder, why are you able to fix man’s eyebrows?”

“This is the first time I tried it, and I was surprised I succeed. On other words, men’s and women’s eyebrows are almost the same.”

After that, I was so excited by myself I had been looking in the mirror, taking

photos of myself. (Koigasaki told me that I'm creepy few times)

"By the way, did you buy a cosplay outfit? It's next week, you know?"

"Yes, I'm waiting to have it delivered now. And you? Is your outfit ready?"

"Yes, we completed in at Azuki-chan's home yesterday! Want to see?" – asked Koigasaki and opened her closet without waiting for my reply. There was an outfit of Hibine Ruru itself.

"Wow! Did you really do this?"

"Of course! Actually, I have only followed Azuki-chan's orders, and she did the most of the work..."

Sakurai-san, you're great. I don't think this is a work of a novice. I was about to have a close look on the outfit, but Koigasaki stopped me because I could break something. Hey, it was you who insisted on showing it to me!

"Then, look here! Here!" – Koigasaki took out something from the desk.

"This is my visit card Azuki-chan made for me! Isn't it cool?"

She shows me a photo of her cosplaying Hibine Ruru, her name "MOMO" and her email address.

"That "MOMO" is my cosplay name! Azuki-chan said it would be better to have some, so I came up with this."

"You came up, you said? Isn't it your real name? And what is with this image?"

"Oh, this... Azuki-chan said I must have the photo on my visit card, so I took the photo she shot when she was in my home recently."

Recently? You are visiting each other frequently, aren't you? I never knew... It doesn't matter, though.

"Is it okay to put your email here? That's your private data."

"That is because I have no PC. I won't give it to boys, only to girls-cosplayers."

I see. Cosplayers usually have visit cards...

"Oh, crap! My mama will come soon!" – said Koigasaki looking at her phone

and panicked.

“She knows you so she won’t be angry, but she would definitely pick on me. She asked me a ton of questions after you left that time.”

“Really?..”

I quickly started to clear my clothes and things.

“Oh, my clothes! I have to change it!”

I’m wearing the clothes I bought today.

“You can go home like this, I think. Besides, there is no time for this.”

“Really? Huh, whatever.”

I thought it wouldn’t matter if I go home like this, so I packed my things and left Koigasaki’s house.

“Do you remember where the station is?” – asked Koigasaki who still went out to see me off to the entrance.

“Yes, it was simple, I guess.”

“I won’t see you off to the station, then.”

I see. Well, that’s fine too.

“One more thing.”

“What again?”

Koigasaki complained that her mother might be annoying.

“I emailed to Hasegawa-san that I can’t go to Odaiba anymore.”

“Oh, I see. Eeeeh?! ” – at first I thought it’s a trivial thing, but that’s actually an unbelievable fact.

“I knew her address since when we exchanged them in karaoke. I said, like, I’m going to a trip with my family that day, I’m sorry and that I’ll return that debt in another way.”

“Wha...?! ”

“You should be grateful.”

T-this means, I'll go to Odaiba with Hasegawa alone. Would it be a date?

"Are you kidding... me..?"

"Am I a sensible person? In return, at the cosplay event, you will have to arrange things so I could have a talk with Suzuki-kun. I'm sure I had helped you a lot, so you have to help me as well! Oh, the mother's coming!"

Koigasaki pushed me out and closed the door.

A date...

A date with Hasegawa alone...

Actually, right now the feeling of "what I fail" is far stronger than "I can't wait". If I'll do something bad, there is a big chance her flag will fall. Koigasaki, what a bothersome thing you did to me! I went from Koigasaki house to the station in a haze.

If Koigasaki won't come, I have to take this all in my hands that day. For now, I sent an email to Hasegawa to get an affirmation. I spent all the time in the cabin to make this email.

[Subject: This is Kashiwada Text: Hello! It has been three days since the summer vacation started. How do you do? Recently, I'm going to work and relaxing at home. (smile) I am sure you have a lot of plans for the vacation. (smile)]

By the way, did you receive an email from Koigasaki regarding visiting Odaiba at August 3rd? She said she is unable to go with us. Can you go with me alone, then? I'm sorry for that.]

I didn't use the stickers as Koigasaki said earlier, only emotions, and made my writing style refined. But one thing bothers me is this email might be too long. It's not a good thing to write long letters, so I abridged the text and cut off unnecessary things.

[Subject: This is Kashiwada Text: How do you do on the vacation? Regarding visiting Odaiba at August 3rd, Koigasaki said she is unable to go with us. I'm sorry. Can you go with me alone, then?]

I said all that I want to, despite the message is appreciably shorter. That is

good. I read it again and sent. There is no quick reply, like Koigasaki. Wait, what is she would never reply? She might not want to go with only me alone. During the walk from the station to home, I've taken out my phone few times and checked emails, but there was no any. I worried that I've sent the email to a wrong person, and few times I checked the Sent folder and read out the email again, but it looks fine as for me.

I went into my house immersed in these thoughts.

"I'm home."

"Hello...?!"

As always, Akari was lying on the sofa in the living room and played games in a T-shirt only, but now she dropped out the controller.

"What is it?"

"Na-N-Naoki? What are these clothes?" – Akari looked on me in agitation. Oh, I forgot I' wearing the clothes I bought today. I guess she'll make fun of me again.

"I bought this today."

"Why would you wear such clothes all of the sudden? It... doesn't suit you at all!"

"Get off." – I was rejected as the previous time and distressed a bit. She's rejecting me, yet she's somehow excited. It could be my imagination, though.

"What did you with your hair? Are you stupid? Don't get cocky! It's ugly!"

Koigasaki spoke well about this look, but Akari is different. Probably, anything I'd wear is ugly.

"Oh, welcome back, Naoki. What are these clothes?" – my mother left the toilet and saw me. Will she make fun of me too?

"It's good! You bought the strange clothes earlier, but this one is fancy! Your hairstyle is well, too. Like, a modern style, fresh one."

Eh?

"Say, Akari, isn't your brother cool?"

“Ha... Huh?! Not at all!”

“Oh, Akari is blushing... You don’t like your brother is cool?”

“It...n-n-not like this...”

What kind of reaction is this? Don’t tell me this outfit is actually good?

“Did you buy it alone?”

“No, I had a girl from my class to select for me.”

“Oh, it makes things clear. You have no taste.”

She said that much... In other words, Koigasaki’s taste seems to be really great.

“By the way, to go to a shopping with a girl... isn’t it a progress for you? It’s a date, isn’t it? I never heard you have played with a girl during your junior high school. Right, Akari? Akari?”

Akari was so loud, but now she’s silent.

“You’re so stupid! What is with shopping with a classmate? A date? Don’t get cocky, Naoki! I’m sure she will make fun of you, play around with you, and get rid of you, and that will be the end!”

I was wrong, she has abused me again with great effort.

“What is it, Akari? Could it be that you are not interested your brother is befriending with a girl?”

“Haaaa?! There is n-n-no way! I don’t care anymore!” – said Akari and ran away in her room, forgetting about the game.

“Children is negativistic age lose their temper easily... I don’t understand them.”

“I have a feeling recently she loses it more frequent.”

Akari always could get angry easily, but recently it got worse. Maybe the mother is right, she is her negativistic age since her junior high school.”

I returned to my room to change the clothes, and took out the phone. There was one new message. At first, I thought it’s a spam mail, but when I opened

it...

[From: Hasegawa Midori

Hello! Koigasaki-san did tell me about this. I don't mind. Kashiwada-kun, can you come along with only me? I can change the date, if you'd need that.]

Yah-hoo!

I didn't read it yet, but I'm happy to receive the first email from Hasegawa. As opposite to Koigasaki's emails, her one is written with flawless Japanese. I read it out few times and saved.

However, even if Hasegawa proposed to select another day... Koigasaki is not actually busy that day, she lied to make us alone. What should I do if Hasegawa would ask to change the day to go three of us with Koigasaki? Well, I'll think about it when she asks it.

My thought process ended up with...

[Thank you for the reply. I don't mind to go by two of us, with the same schedule. What do you think about it?]

Whoa... Won't she find out that I want to go with her alone? I have worried, and I had nothing to do but wait for her reply. After ten long minutes, the reply had come.

[Okay, where will we go that day, and at what time?]

This is a businesslike message, but I was happy she decided to go with me only. I saved this message. After that, I did some researches of the place of Odaiba and selected the time and place.

[Let's meet at the Odaiba Seaside Park Station, at the one o'clock.]

This time, her reply had come within five minutes.

[Okay.]

A plain email, but I saved this one too.

[Uh, agreed], I replied, and after that no reply had come.

*

Two next days I had been on the shifts, and two days I was there Yamamoto-san was absent, so my work was sad. Besides him, there is no single person I had not befriended with. What a lame of me. At the second day when I came home, my mother said that she received a mail for me. Receiving the package, I understood this is the cosplay outfit I've ordered on the trading website.

"They took money from me, so be sure to pay your debts."

"Oh, thanks." – I took out 3,000 yen from my wallet.

"How much was it in total?"

"Few hundreds of yen, maybe. This is nothing, keep that at yourself."

I can't show her what is inside, so I opened the box in my room. Well, this is the cosplay outfit so I wasn't cheated. This is the good news.

"Ew..."

This is the bad news. It looks way cruder than it was in the pictures. Now I understand why it was cheap. I have to wear this to the event anyway. I feel sad about it, however I'm but an attendant at the event, so this would be fine.

Chapter 8

Tomorrow is the day of the cosplay event, July 29. I have no shifts today and tomorrow, so I'm playing games with Akari. The mother few times said me to go to sleep early, but I didn't listen to her and she fell asleep first. At the midnight, my phone rang.

"Naoki, your phone is too loud."

"Yeah, some spam again..."

[From: Koigasaki Momo

Crap! It seems I won't come tomorrow.]

There was a heavily crying emotion at the end.

"What?!" – I surprised aloud and promptly replied.

[Huh? Why?!]

[My little sister drew my outfit all over with magic ink. It's oil ink, so I can't remove it...]

"Hey-hey-hey..."

"Naoki, enough talking by yourself, you stopped the game."

"Oh, my bad. I have to call now."

I'm tired of mail exchanging and called Koigasaki.

"Hey, why did you drop the game in midstream? What do I do now?"

"Go ahead to play without me... Hi, Koigasaki?" – I left Akari shouting behind me.

"Hi there." – said Koigasaki. Her voice was as sad as never before.

"Are you really can't remove those drawings from your outfit? Did you try to bleach it out?"

"My mama tried everything, but no use."

"That's bad, so you have to re-do it..."

“I have cloth leftovers because I bought too much, but the event is tomorrow! I have no time for this! I took four days to make this with help of Azuki-chan!”

“I see. Well, sorry for this outfit, so you would need to buy a new one tomorrow morning.”

“You said that Hibine Ruru’s outfit is not sold yet.” – said Koigasaki with almost crying voice.

“Oh, that’s true... Which makes re-doing the last option, right? Let’s talk to Sakurai-san.”

“... No.”

“Eh?”

“I have her to help me this much, and see what I have done with her work! There is no way I could say it Azuki-chan. Maybe it’s a curse for I wanted to cosplay with the impure motive.” – mumbled Koigasaki with an aloof voice which is not like her by any means.

“So what are you going to do?”

“Do I have a choice? I have no time to do a thing. I feel bad for Azuki-chan, but she will cosplay alone, I’ll accompany her.”

“Are you giving up?”

“Like I would want to give up after all that I’ve done! But there is nothing I can do. That’s just impossible.” – screamed Koigasaki. Probably, she’s crying right now on the other side of the line.

“Apologize to Sakurai-san and tell her what happened. What if there is a chance to do something?”

“Do you know what time is it? She might be sleeping now, and in mere chance she is not, trains aren’t run, so she can’t do anything!”

Yes, this is the time when the last trains running.

“ ... ”

We kept silence for a while.

“I have had you to do a lot, and all of that is useless now. I’m sorry.” – said

Koigasaki, and our conversation ended.

Hey, it's not a joke.

She decided to make a cosplay, involved me with this, undertook a maid job she is hate in the café. and she made the outfit from the scratch, and right before the event she can't do anything? What was all that fuss about, then? How can I let her give up now?

"Naoki, did you end the call? Let's play..."

"Oh, sorry, I have no time for this."

"Huh? What does that mean?!" – Akari got angry with me and started a game alone.

I thought for a while and there was only one idea in the end. I took my phone again and opened the phonebook.

At the letter "S" I found Sakurai-san's phone number. We exchanged them with Koigasaki's mediation where we had met the first time. Of course, we had never used each other's contacts. Furthermore, seeing that hate towards me she might have deleted my contacts.

After a few calls, her voice mail activated. I canceled and pressed the redial. Yes, she doesn't answer. I guess she's sleeping considering that tomorrow is the event day. I decided to write her an email.

[Sakurai-san, I'm sorry being so late. Koigasaki has urgent troubles, so I need your help. Please redial upon seeing this email.] I wrote with no re-read as I have no time for this. I betted everything on her awake from the ringtone of the email came.

I wasted 30 minutes waiting for her reply. My phone never rang. Sakurai-san might have fallen asleep long ago. What can I do? I have to give up too...

Nope, that won't do. No matter what.

Think! I need another method!

I opened my phonebook thinking to call her again on the chance. I noticed her profile apart from contacts. I searched for her home phone number, but I had no luck. Yet there was her birthday and address... I was surprised seeing her

address. It's fairly close to the home of my friend. I often had been riding to his place during my junior high school. It's about thirty minutes on a bike.

"I can go there." – I murmured. I thought I can find the Sakurai-san's home on the maps, riding the bicycle. I probably can do something if I reach to her house. I even can seat Sakurai-san on the luggage carrier and take her to Koigasaki... It was the only solution I could devise.

Of course, I can fail to find her house. It's unclear whether I can call her out, even if I'd found her house. And I don't know would she come to Koigasaki's house if I succeed to call her out.

But if there is the slightest chance, it's better to make use of it rather go to sleep. I decided to ride to Sakurai-san's house.

I asked Akari to keep this from the mother and quietly left the house. I rode the night road, looking the maps.

"According to the maps, it's around here..."

I came to the surrounding of the place where Sakurai-san's house should be, and started to look around for the Sakurais' nameplate.

"Here is it!" I managed to find her nameplate! It was a standalone two-storied house. There were names of all family members on the nameplate, as well as "Sakurai Azuki". This is her house for sure. I tried to call her once again, but as in the previous time, the voice mail connected.

There is the only way to call Sakurai-san – to use the intercom. However lights are out on both first and second floors, so using the intercom is worse than spam. But I have no choice. There is no way to return home like this. I'll bother you a bit. Just when I reached my hand to the intercom button... What a miracle, the light goes on on the second floor! I can see a silhouette through the windows.

The lights are on; however, whose room is that? I can't possibly know. Usually, kids live on the upper floors, but this is not a rule. Well, it's no point immersing in thought now and here. What is the person turn lights off and fall asleep again? Why have I ridden here in the middle of the night?

One more step left. One more step from Sakurai-san.

“Sakurai-sa-an!” – I screamed her name with all my might towards the room with lights on.

Hey, isn't it a worse bother than using the intercom? Screaming in the night... But I didn't think about something else.

Hey, isn't it a worse bother than using the intercom? Screaming in the night... But I didn't think about something else.

After a while, the windows on the second floor, where I saw the light, opened. It will be bad if that's her parents. Yet, luckily, it was Sakurai-san herself. She saw me and surprised. Then she closed the window. For a moment, I thought she made it as she didn't see me, but after that, she came out of the entrance in her pajama.

“I'm really sorry for this in the middle of the night.” – I thought it's the first thing I have to do.

“What did happen?!” – she wasn't angry, rather she was severely surprised.

“Koigasaki is in an emergency. I need your help. I failed to get to your phone, so I came here with fully understanding I would bother you.”

“Momo-chan is in an emergency?!” – surprised Sakurai-san, and I explained her the situation.

“So Koigasaki said that's cruel to you and that she can't say it to you.”

“I see... I can't promise anything until I saw the condition, but we could patch-up it at least.” – Sakurai-san has a worried face. I thought she would get angry, but she's worried about Koigasaki.

“If it's not a bother to you, I could ride you to Koigasaki's house on this bike. We could find the means for it with you.”

“Kashiwada-kun, can you ride all the path to the Momo-chan's house from here?”

“Yes, however I'd have to look on the maps till we ride to the station near her home.”

Yes. I came here because I know this path, but I don't know how to go to Koigasaki's house from here. I will have to depend on the maps.

“I see. But her house is near the school, right?”

“Eh? Yes.”

“When I was in junior high school, I visited a cultural festival in the senior high school. As I didn’t have a season ticket to that school, I had been riding there on a bike with my mother. I was just trying, can I go to school on a bike.”

“How was that?”

“It took about twenty minutes. I was following my mother, but I think I remember the path.”

“Great! If we will find the school, I’ll ride us to Koigasaki’s house.”

Twelve minutes is closer than I expected.

“Great! Okay, I’m going to take my sewing set and other things from my room.” –said Sakurai-san and went to the house.

That a relief that Sakurai-san wishes to help. She sincerely worries about Koigasaki. She surely likes her. A few minutes later, Sakurai-san came out of the house with a big bag.

“I’ll go to the event right from Momo-chan’s house, so I packed my things for tomorrow and a sewing set, that is why my bag so big. I’m heavy alone, and this bag... Can you ride?”

“Yes, I can, don’t worry.” – said and put her bag in the front basket. Sakurai-san sat on the bike.

“Ride this road straight. There will be a turn to right later.”

Sakurai-san is working as a navigator.

“Okay. I’m moving forward.”

“Okay.”

I’m a bit nervous because Sakurai-san grabbed my back. I didn’t expect the event of me riding a bike with a girl on the luggage carrier would happen now. It’s not a time for this, though. I had been driving Akari when she was in grade school, but I can’t help now when a girl of the same age with my sister is behind me. This is completely different feeling.

“Ouch.” – said Sakurai-san when I rode from a step.

“Sorry...!!”

It was a moment, but I definitely felt something soft on my back. It took me another moment to understand that it was Sakurai-san’s breast. Hey, me, it’s not a right time to think this way!

“Hey, did you tell Momo-chan that we are coming?”

“Eh? AAA! I didn’t!” – my voice was strange and nervous.

“I’ll call her right now, then. I don’t want to bother her by a sudden visit. You can go this way.”

“Okay, thank you!”

“Eh?..” – Sakurai-san uttered a surprised voice.

“Kashiwada-kun, you did send me so many emails and called me... I’m sorry, I was sleeping...”

It seems she opened her phone to call Koigasaki and noticed that I’ve been trying to contact with her.

“I’m sorry too, I knew that I’ll bother you, but I have nobody else to rely on.”

“It was so hot in my room I woke up to turn on my fan, and I heard your voice. At first I thought I’m hearing things, so it was a great coincidence I’ve woke up, turn the light on, and opened the window.”

“You’re right, it’s a great coincidence.”

I’m sincerely grateful to this coincidence. Sakurai-san reached to Koigasaki, and explained everything to her.

“What did Koigasaki say?”

“Well, she has surprised to receive a call from me. Probably, she has been crying. And apologized few times.”

“I see.”

Koigasaki could not tell this to Sakurai-san, so she must resent me now... I have asked Sakurai-san to come off the bike near a police box, but other than

that, I've been riding according to her navigation. The silence made me feel uncomfortable, so I decided to say something.

"You're great, Sakurai-san, to be able to make a dress by your own... That's impossible for me."

"That's nothing..."

The conversation is over. Am I unable to continue a conversation with any girl except Koigasaki? It's awkward to leave it as is, so I spoke to Sakurai-san again.

"By the way, I was thinking all the time, why did you wear that cosplay in a clubroom?"

"Oh, you mean... then?" – said Sakurai-san. I can't see her face, yet I got her confusion.

"Do you remember that outfit? Can you recognize a character I was cosplaying?"

"I remember that outfit, but I never saw that character."

"It's a suit from a game, but the outfit was a school uniform. I thought it would fit my school view, so I went to shooting in the school. Also, nobody should have come that day, it was a day off, so I had brought a wig and an outfit into the clubroom. Then I used digital camera and timer to make shots. Oh, I was so stupid. You and other club members saw me in that outfit in the end."

"I see, the view is important too. Wasn't it better to have club members to make shots? I think they could do much better photos than you did with a camera timer."

"There is no way I could!" – said Sakurai-san a bit louder.

"Oh, so you hide your cosplay things from other club members. I completely forgot, sorry." – I hit a mine.

"But think it's not a thing you have to hide. They are manga researchers so I suppose a lot of them interested in cosplay."

She might have befriended with other hidden cosplayers if she hadn't concealed it. Besides, I don't understand the reason to hide it anyway.

“I was in manga researchers club in junior high as well.”

“M? Uh.”

“I was young then, so I did cosplay in the clubroom with friends. I feel uneasy thinking of it now, but a boy saw and said... a pervy thing to us...”

“What did he say?”

“You’d call that a harassment. Another time, he brought a very exposed cosplay outfit and asked to wear it. I started to hate it since then, and decided do not cosplay in the club.”

“I see...” – was a little happy because Sakurai-san is talking to me like this for the first time.

“Another guy said I’m cute in cosplay but ugly in my casual suit, and I should wear cosplay all the time.”

“I think he liked you.”

“It’s impossible. They were showing no interest to me. They paid me such attention only when I did cosplay.”

“I see.”

“I hesitated whether to join a manga researcher club in my senior high school, but I wanted an otaku friend, so I ended up joining. However, I decided to hide my cosplaying things, for not going through that again. But eventually, I felt uncomfortable there and I became a ghost member. But now I have Momo-chan as my friend, so I’m good now.”

So that is the reason she got to hate otaku guys.

“Oh, I have been talking to myself... I’m sorry!”

“Not at all! I’ve listened to you!”

In fact, I’m happy to hear that from her. Sakurai-san is struggling about things too... It’s no wonder she hates otaku boys.

“Oh, we’re almost there.”

I’ve noticed that we’re at the nearest station already. I was at Koigasaki’s house two times, so I remember where to go. In five minutes, we had arrived at

her house. I stopped the bike at the fence.

“I’ll call Momo-chan.”

Sakurai-san got down, took her luggage from the basket, and took out her phone.

“Okay. Take care of Koigasaki, then.” – I said and rode the bike again.

“Oh, Kashiwada-kun.” – said Sakurai-san when I was about to go.

“Eh?”

“Well... Thank you for contacting me.”

“Oh, not at all.” – I was surprised by her gratitude.

“I’ll sure take care of Momo-chan.”

“Okay, see you.” – I said and started to go again. I never returned home from Koigasaki’s house, so I have to wander around train lines a lot before I arrived home.

*

In the morning, I was woken up by Koigasaki’s call.

“Hello?” – I lifted the receiver. I thought she’d get angry I gave away that to Sakurai-san.

“Ah, Kashiwada? I’m sorry for waking you up. We have just repaired my outfit.”

“Oh, really?”

“I’m sorry for I caused you so many troubles... Thank you for bringing Azuki-chan.”

“No, not at all...” – I was surprised she’s not angry. Then we agreed to exchange emails once we got to the event.

I agreed with Suzuki to meet in front of the main entrance of International Exhibition Centre Station. We will exchange emails with Koigasaki when we changed clothes. Cosplay and wig are denser than I expected, and I packed them into my sports bag from when I was in junior high.

I arrived at the station right in time, but Suzuki was waiting for me already.

“Oh, I made you wait.”

“Oh, Kasshi? I was so excited I couldn’t sleep tonight!” – Suzuki waved me and said it with a peaceful face. I think I got the reason why he’s so popular.

“But... are you sure to do cosplay with the likes of me?”

“What are you talking about? Cosplay cannot be good or bad.”

The event is held in the Tokyo Fashion Town near the station, also called as TFT. I never was there. Suzuki saw girls who had pulled carts and said that they must be cosplayers, so we followed them to the event hall.

“Wow, how many peoples are here...” – I was surprised to see so many participants. Most of them are young females. I paid the entrance fee of 1,500 yen and headed to the men dressing room. In comparison with the outside, this room is empty. It seems male cosplayers are rare.

I took out the newbie-made coarse outfit that I bought on the net trading site. By the way, it will be the first time I’m wearing this. Well, let’s try then.

It was tough, yet I managed to get into this shapeless outfit. Looking in the mirror I just made sure it’s awkward. I changed my clothes; however they say there is a special place where staff put on wigs. I went there and I noticed Suzuki-kun doing something unexpected.

“Suzuki... Are you putting on makeup?..”

Suzuki started applying makeup, sitting in a wig’s net.

“Well... My older sister is an experienced cosplayer, and she said that men doing this as well, and forced me to learn this...”

I thought about it later, but despite his relationship with his sister is tough, they behave like friends...

“But I have no makeup things.”

“I lend them, of course!”

“No, but I don’t know how to use that, and it makes me feel bad.”

“I can do it for you.”

“Eh? No-no-no, you shouldn’t do that!” – I rejected his proposition and put the wig on my head. Actually, men around me are doing the makeup, so I guess I’d have to learn it for the next time.

I had looked in the mirror after I completed everything. Ew... That’s not suited for me. I was disappointed, but then I said to myself that I came here to support Suzuki and help Koigasaki with her love’s pathway.

“Okay, I’m ready now.” – I said to Suzuki and I was surprised his complete and refined cosplay outfit. He looked as if he just came from the 2D world. I’m impressed by such friend.

“You’re nice per se, but your hairstyle and makeup are perfect. Is it really your first time to do a cosplay?”

“Um, yeah. My sister prepared the set for the wig, though.”

The set for the wig... I see. Wigs are not to be put on right after buying, but you have to match your wig with the outfit and your character. It convinced me why this wig is so far from my character. We done our preparations and left the makeup area, left the luggage at the checkroom, and come to a big area called the cosplay space.

The crowd grew bigger and louder. Familiar goods and cosplays are here and there. Looking at the people around me, I didn’t believe my eyes first. That’s only natural their clothes are on the different level than mine, but wigs and sets are in perfect match with their characters, and most of them did a splendid makeup. Some of them have nice widgets. They all do their best... I’ve impressed and at the same time I feel ashamed by own appearance.

“Wow, great.” – slipped out from my lips.

There was one more thing. Many girls wear very exposed outfits, similar to a swimsuit. A single heedless move might open even more of skin. There were girls whose breast was half-visible, and those with skirts short enough to see their stripy panties, those panties are intended for showing and yet I’m feeling arousal.

Here I remembered that I should have to assist Koigasaki, and put out my desire to take photos of those girls.

“Kasshi, did you bring a camera? Let’s take photos!”

“A camera? No, I didn’t...”

Oh! I forgot that cosplay is entirely for photos. But I rather want there will be no photos of my outfit. Maybe it was a right decision to leave my camera home.

“Then, I’ll send the photos to your email after the event. Let’s take photos for now!”

“Don’t mind me, give me the camera I’ll take you.”

“Excuse me.” – some woman interrupted us. I turned back and saw three vocaloids with a camera. Wow, they are cute.

“Could you please let us take a photo?” – said a girl with a childish voice and with sparkles in her eyes. She said to Suzuki, of course.

“Well, I don’t mind... Kasshi, they want to shoot you!”

“Not me, they want you!”

“Then, could you two to pose for us, please?” – said a vocaloid girl out of compassion. I want to drop dead. Right now.

“Okay, please.”

I didn’t know what pose I have to do, so I stand still. Oh, I sure I don’t want to shoot me at all, I’m sorry, I was thinking until the end.

“Thank you very much!” – said the girls to us, we answered them and I thought they will go now, but they took something from their bags.

“This is my visit card, if you’d like...”

“Thanks.”

It was the same kind of visit cards that Koigasaki showed recently, a cosplayed visit card.

“You know, Jean’s cosplay suit you very well!” – suddenly said a girl giving the visit card to Suzuki.

“I like Jean very much, and furthermore, is suits you so good you look like the real Jean.”

“Oh, thanks.” – Suzuki gave a well-bred reply.

“We make a cosplay of Phi Kickers too!”

“Oh, really?”

“Yes! Would you like to cosplay with us together next time?”

“Oh, okay, next time, then!” – Suzuki gives nothing but well-bred replies, the difference in their moods is pronounced. But man, you’re popular even here... That’s no wonder, though, you’re a handsome man even wearing the cosplay. I like it too, let aside women. I was going to take photos this time, but cosplayer women have asked Suzuki to take his photos. This time I was completely ignored, and after that, they have a conversation, so I have a free time.

I remembered about Koigasaki. I forgot to email her! [I’ve changed clothes and now on some kind of open space. Where are you?] – I quickly wrote.

“I’m sorry, Kassi!” – it seems Suzuki finally managed to get rid of those cosplayers.

“You’re so popular.”

“Well, the thing is male cosplayers are rare, that’s all.”

I have a feeling that you denied my existence.

“These girls were cuties! Did you get their visit cards?”

“Really? I don’t remember them...” – said Suzuki with a wide smile on his face.

“When you said you want to go to a cosplay event, I thought even you’re interested in cosplay girls. Was I wrong?”

“Of course! All I wanted is to do a cosplay. I did the Phi Kickers to match with you, Kasshi, and I didn’t want to take photos of some other cosplay girls. You see, cosplay is nice, but 2D girl are 2D girls, and 3D girls are still 3D girls no matter what.”

“Really? So you do not have any slightest interest in 3D girls?..”

Are you a human male or what? I’m starting to worry in a certain manner.

“Yeah. All I need is friends like you who can share my hobbies and 2D.”

However, if he truly feels like this, changes for Koigasaki to become his girlfriend are somehow low. Thinking this way, I remembered her existence. Crap, I've emailed her, but I didn't check email since. Okay, one new email, as expected...

[I guess I can't meet with Suzuki-kun after all... And I become ashamed by my outfit... What should I do?...]

"What?!" – slipped out from my mouth.

"What is it, Kasshi?"

"Oh, it's nothing..." – I lied. What the crap! You come through that much to get to this event!

"Sorry, Suzuki. I have to go to a toilet."

"Okay."

I went so far I couldn't see Suzuki and call to Koigasaki.

"Oh, Kashiwada-kun? Did you see the email?"

"Of course! What are you think are you doing?"

"But..."

"Where are you?"

"I've just entered the building. Also, I was caught, so I can't move now... Oh, I'm sorry, I hang up now." – and she really hung up. By the way, who caught her? I thought to bring Suzuki there, but I'm not sure they will be all right, and Sakurai-san is also there so they would have no chance to talk alone. Which means, I should find Koigasaki and send her to Suzuki.

I started bustling through the crowd to the entrance looking for Koigasaki. I noticed queues to cosplayers. What kind of a cosplay did they do to have such queues?

Most of them have very exposed outfits, but one girl among them have not, and yet she has a long queue. She seems very cute from this far... Huh? Isn't that Koigasaki? I've come closer and it is her.

She exposed a little of her skin in comparison with other cosplayers, but I

guess to be as cute as she is enough to have such a queue. Her particular clothes are no-sleeves and short mini-skirt, so you can see her legs. And she's cuter after you saw other cosplayers: bluish wig of Hibine Ruru suits her, it looks like the advent of Hibine Ruru from the 2D world.

"Hey, isn't Hibine Ruru cosplay cute?"

"You're right! I want to shoot her! But that queue is too long." – said two girls beside me. Even girls praised her! Why would she lose her confidence, then?

"Kashiwada-kun?.." – suddenly, I heard somebody behind me.

"Eh?"

There was the same beautiful girl that I saw before when she fell from the stairs. Yes, Sakura-san, but she doesn't look like usual herself partially due to her wig and contact lenses, but she definitely is so beautiful I can't believe she is a real human. White skin, noble face, notable style. So I didn't mistake her for somebody else back then. Also, I wasn't really wrong thinking she is not from our world. A little part of her ample breast is visible in her décolleté, and slender yet long legs are not hidden by her mini-skirt.

"!.." – she noticed I was looking at her breast, and hid it with her luggage.

"I'm s-sorry!"

"No, I'm bad, I've overreacted..."

Is she feeling shame to show me this exposed clothes? She averts her eyes from me.

"Anyway! I have left Momo-chan for a little while to go to a toilet, and look what happened!" – Sakurai-san surprised by the queue to Koigasaki. We headed to Koigasaki.

"Momo-chan, are you all right?" – asked Sakurai-san when photographer changed.

"No, I'm not! I have been learning all poses, and yet I was told that poses are wrong. Other told me to sit, and they definitely wanted to shoot my panties! I'm wearing tights, though." – said Koigasaki quietly so nobody else won't hear her.

“Eh? Kashiwada? What are you doing here?” – she finally noticed me.

“You learned the poses?”

“Hey, it was you who told me to learn them! Not only poses, I heard many original Hibine Ruru’s songs! They were so good I couldn’t believe that’s a machine song. Songs were very good too! I’d want to sing some of them in a karaoke.”

“You came all the way long and now you refuse to meet him?”

I was surprised she actually did that much just because she was told by me? That was unexpected.

“When I’ve put on the wig and looked in the mirror I felt very ashamed.”

“Hey, you did a lot of things by yourself, both me and Sakurai-san helped you as well, and this is what you want to say?” – I said it loud so Koigasaki trembled a bit.

“I understand that it’s a stupid thing to say right now.”

“Suzuki is inside that space. Go ahead!”

“Excuse me, can we start shooting already?” – a photographer who stood first in the queue interrupted us. Crap, I completely forgot about the queue.

“Oh, we apologize, it seems her stomach is hurt, and she went to a toilet.” – it was an obvious lie, but I had to tell this to the photographer.

“Eeeh?” – his eyebrows got closer and his face displayed confusion. It’s only natural, to get angry waiting so long and go with empty hands. However, the moment his face relaxed.

“What about you, miss?” – his eyes changed when he noticed Sakurai-san. He implies that is Koigasaki is absent, Sakurai-san will be fine too?

“Yes, if you’d like to...” – the unexpected phrase came up from Sakurai-san.

“Eh? Azuki-chan?!” – Koigasaki was surprised.

“Well, don’t really understand what is going on, but you can leave here to me.” – said Sakurai-san and backslapped her.

“But... but...”

“No worries, I like being shot!”

“Okay, can we start?” – spoke the photographer, and Sakurai-san took a pose. Wow, she’s used to this! She knows her poses!

“Go ahead!” – I pulled Koigasaki’s arm.

“Azuki-chan, thank you!” – Koigasaki thanked her and I dragged her to Suzuki.

“Can you see Suzuki near the wall there?” – I dragged Koigasaki to a distance from where we could barely see Suzuki, and told her where Suzuki is.

“Don’t worry, these are not that much of people who could match Suzuki-kun, so I’ll find him quick.”

“Okay, go.”

“Okay...” – Koigasaki started to go to him slowly.

“Koigasaki”, – I said from the behind. She turned her face back.

“Good luck.” – I said. She was gloomy, but hearing that she smiled a little bit, and headed to Suzuki. It would be worst if Suzuki finds me out from here, so I’ll go to Sakurai-san. Sakurai-san probably confused, she does not know anything. I guess I should introduce her with what are we doing, because she has helped us a lot.

When I returned to Sakurai-san, the queue decreased a lot... And I couldn’t restrain my emotions watching the scene.

A photographer squatted in front of Sakurai-san and trying to shoot from the floor. Isn’t it odd? This is too much even for a low angle photo. Isn’t he trying to catch her panties? Or maybe I don’t know something and this is a usual thing here? I was thinking this way until I saw an expression on Sakurai-san’s face.

She was confused looking at the photographer. She doesn’t like this, obviously.

“Excuse me, this is not a proper way doing photos.” – I quickly approached to the photographer.

“Eh? I wasn’t interested in catching her panties or something like that...” – said the photographer with a displeased face. What another purpose you can

have making a photo from that angle?

“Don’t you say misleading things!” – grumbled the photographer, ceased the session and left.

“Well, sometimes you meet with such jerks.” – I said to Sakurai-san and she has sat on the floor.

“Sakurai-san, are you alright?”

“Y-yes, I’m all right... It just that man was scary, I guess...” – she holds herself together to not cry. You’re not alright at all.

“You know, I don’t like otaku guys.”

“Yeah, I heard it from Koigasaki.”

Yes, Koigasaki told me this earlier, but Sakurai-san never mentioned it. I’m happy she trusts me a little. But again, she dislikes otaku males, yet she decided to do poses in front of photographs instead of Koigasaki. Just how much do you like her?..

“I heard Momo-chan dislikes men too, and yet she got a job in that café. Every day she had a shift I was her struggling. It wasn’t that serious for me, but then because of the guys from manga researchers club of junior high, I completely hate otaku.”

“When I listened to you yesterday, I thought it’s natural to hate guys after that.”

“Why do you think so? Other girls from the manga researchers club answered to vulgar jokes with smiles, and I was the only one who had been displeased by that. I thought I should not have been taking that as offenses.”

“No way! A usual girl would definitely hate that! I personally think that the girls who can smile hearing that are something.”

“Are you?..” – asked Sakurai-san and stares at my face.

“However, whenever I’d do a cosplay or work in a maid café, everything I love is associated with otaku culture.” – said Sakurai-san and sighed out, probably remembering that photograph.

“By the way, did Momo-chan meet a cosplayer she likes?”

“Eh? A cosplayer?”

“She said she wants to meet somebody at the event, so I thought there is a cosplayer she likes.”

“Ah! Uh. I think she did.”

I wasn't sure to reveal Suzuki's name here.

“Kashiwada-kun, why do you help Momo-chan that much?”

“Eh?” – I was surprised by the unexpected stream of the questions from Sakurai-san.

“You're always beside her, and yesterday, and today. You do help her a lot.”

“Well, I have reasons for that.” – I evaded the question, because I thought I have to get approval from Koigasaki first. Sakurai-san stared at me. What a great feeling being stared by a beauty in a cosplay. I feel I could fall in love.

“And it was you who told her she must learn own character, right?”

“Eh? Um, yes.”

She must have heard it from Koigasaki. Well, I did tell Koigasaki that, so what?

“I have told you one lie.”

“Eh? W-what was that?”

“I had thought that all otaku guys are vulgar, filthy, dirty, and have only sex on their minds. I understood that this is but a prepossession, but all the otaku I saw was this kind of people, so I started to believe in it somewhere in my heart.”

Well, that is only natural if all guys from the manga research club were like that.

“But if there is a different guy, who is good, pure, and...”

“Eh?”

“I didn't get what she's talking about, when my phone rang. It was Suzuki.

“Kasshi, where are you?”

“Oh, sorry, I’m in the toilet, I’ll come to you soon!” – I gave out to Suzuki and dropped the phone.

“I’m going to find Momo-chan and get her back.”

“Oh, sure. Thanks a lot!”

Koigasaki could meet with Suzuki today owing to Sakurai-san.

“What are thanking for? W-well, goodbye then.”

I felt out conversation was interrupted, but I said Suzuki that I’ll get back soon, so I parted with Sakurai-san and returned to Suzuki.

“I was so surprised! When you disappeared, a super cute Hibine Ruru came to me!” – I found Suzuki excited once I came to him.

“...Huh?”

“I was thinking a cosplay is nothing but 3D in the end, but that Hibine Ruru is exceptional!”

That Hibine Ruru must be Koigasaki, but there is one thing I can’t comprehend.

“Did not you have a talk with that Hibine Ruru?”

“Oh, yes. She came to me saying hello, and I replied to her. Then, she praised my cosplay and I did the same for her.”

Wait a minute. Really.

“I was surprised since there are very few of Hibine Ruru cosplays. She was so nice... I should have taken some photos of her.”

“I see... That’s good...” – I sadly replied to him.

What the...

Suzuki has completely missed the fact that it was Koigasaki cosplaying Hibine Ruru.

She gathered all she had to spoke to you... Sakurai-san and I worked a lot... Again, why are you so dumb?

After that, Suzuki and I grew hungry and bought a pancake there, shoot each

other, and asked somebody to shoot us (by Suzuki's camera), and when the time was up, we changed clothes and headed home.

On the way home, I received an email from Koigasaki. I redialed to her.

"Hello, Kashiwada!"

"Hi."

I'm not sure should I get angry or console her. I want to get angry, but she might be depressed.

"Well, thank you for today!"

"...?!" – I didn't understand why she is so happy.

"That's owing to you I could speak with Suzuki-kun. It was a short chat for us two, but Suzuki praised my cosplay. I was very happy!~"

Might it be that you...

"It seems Suzuki-kun thought badly about me, but now it's over! What did he say about me? Did he said, like, he didn't expect me to be an otaku?"

It's not "might". She definitely doesn't realize that Suzuki hasn't recognized get in that outfit. What a pity, I'm going to cry.

"Why are you silent? I asked what he said about me?"

"Oh... He said you were super cute." – I desperately said to her. That's a true, though.

"Are you serious?!" – Koigasaki screamed through the phone.

"You're serious? My bad, I'm so happy! I'm happy!"

It could be the first time I see Koigasaki so happy. Crap, I can't tell her Suzuki didn't recognize her. Who would think he is unable to recognize that...

"That's all? Did he say anything else?"

"Nothing particular."

"I see... Well, if he said that to you, it must be his true feelings! It was worth it to go through all that and to do the cosplay!" – Koigasaki spoke to herself in good mood. I have no power to say the truth after all.

“By the way, are you angry for something?”

“Not at all.”

“I made a good impression on him, right? Why are you not happy?”

I have a great reason for that! She doesn't know what I'm thinking about, and enjoys herself... well, I couldn't say her the truth, so it's logical, but that angers me. I don't understand why, though.

“I'm giving you a gratitude call, and what I get?”

“A gratitude call? You have wanted to know what Suzuki told about you, haven't you?”

“Huh? That irritates me! I don't care anymore. Bye!” – Koigasaki dropped the phone. I don't know why I'm so mad either. Why did I feel no interest in that? I was struggling, yet I didn't call Koigasaki after that. I've immersed into my bed and fallen asleep. I don't want to think about that now.

The next day, I woke up and checked my phone. Of course, there were no emails from Koigasaki. I thought to send her an email with apologies, but my fingers didn't move.

Crap! The date with Hasegawa comes up soon, and I'm in conflict with Koigasaki. I planned to ask Koigasaki for some advices before the date... Moreover, how would I come to the date with Hasegawa worrying about this and that, being in conflict with Koigasaki? At that moment, I received an email. I thought it was from Koigasaki and quickly opened my phone.

[From: Sakurai Azuki]

Sakurai-san? Why? I opened her email wondering what it is.

[Thank you for yesterday! I appreciate your help. Let's do a cosplay by three of us next time! (smile)]

Huh? What a queer positive email. I was about to close that email, but noticed that there is the space following. Scrolling message down...

[P.S. Kashiwada-kun, are you in love with Momo-chan?]

“Eh?”

What a strange email. Especially, the last part, with ashamed deco-emoji. I had read it again few times, and still I was unable to understand it. What incomprehensible creatures are the girls, – I thought like a true man, but that thought vanished quickly.